
Matthew | AMEN Bible Study 2021

“Dealing with Doubt”

Matthew 11:1-30

March 17, 2021

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The expression, "And when Jesus finished these sayings," in 11:1 is the second of five times that formula is used to demarcate a section of Matthew's gospel. Previously we saw it in 7:28, and going forward we will see it again in 13:53; 19:1; and 26:1.

B. Chapter 13 contains the third of Jesus' five discourses, around which Matthew structures his gospel, but chapter 11 marks the preparation for that discourse on Jesus' Royal Method in his mission. Part of that method is his way of identifying different kinds of DOUBT and showing different approaches for each kind. We see three kinds of doubt in this chapter, and we learn how to deal with them in ourselves and in others we are trying to help spiritually.

II. BODY

A. Treatable doubt (11:1-19)

1. Emotional doubt (vv. 1-3, 6): "Hang in there!" (the circumstance)

2. Intellectual doubt (vv. 4-6): "Believe!" (the evidence)

3. Volitional doubt (vv. 7-19): "Repent!" (the smoke screens)

B. Terminal doubt (11:20-24)

1. It was deadly there (vv. 20-22; cf. Isa. 23; Eze. 26-28 on Tyre & Sidon)

2. It was deadly then (vv. 23-24; cf. Gen. 19; Eze. 16 on Sodom)

3. It is even more deadly here & now! (vv. 22, 24 on the cities that saw his miracles)

C. Temporary doubt (11:25-30)

1. Due to the grace of their Father & ours (vv. 25-26; cf. John 6:44)
2. Due to their & our trust in his Son (vv. 27-30; cf. John 6:37)

III. CONCLUSION

A. Blaise Pascal on soft agnosticism. We will doubt, but when we doubt, we can come to Jesus to address it honestly and diligently. **Come to Jesus!** (Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17). "I can only have compassion for those who sincerely bewail their doubt ... and, who, sparing no effort to escape it, make of this inquiry their principal and most serious occupations" (*Pensees*, #194).

B. Os Guinness on "the Square One Principle." "If we go back to square one (and so back to our roots ...) we will find a faith which is solid and secure. The lesson of the Square One principle is this: The person who has the courage to go back when necessary is the one who goes on to the end" (*In Two Minds*, p. 19)

Discussion Questions

1. (11:1-3) Do you think John the Baptist is guilty of sinful doubt in vv. 1-3? Why or why not?
2. Can you think of and share a time in your Christian life when you were tempted to fall away because your circumstances seemed incompatible with Christ as your King and Savior?
3. (11:4-6) Jesus gives John and his disciples evidence to support their faith in him as Messiah and King in verses 4-6 (cf. Isa. 35:4-6; 61:1). What is for you the "bottom line" foundation" or "square one" of your faith in Christ that you return to in times of doubt or difficulty?
4. (11:7-19) What do you see as three good reasons for the greatness of John the Baptist in these verses and three good reasons that the least believer in the kingdom of heaven now is even greater?
5. (11:20-24) Do you think we in America in the twenty-first century will be held to a higher standard for judgment than the cities of Galilee Jesus denounced in verses 20-24 or a lower one? Why?
6. (11:25-27) Read these verses and John 6:35-48. Do you think both of these passages teach human responsibility in conversion or divine sovereignty in conversion or both? If you say "both," how is your answer not irrational (violating the logical law of non-contradiction)?
7. (11:28-30) Read these verses and Isaiah 55:1; John 7:37-38; and Revelation 22:17. How do these scriptural invitations to repentance and faith make you FEEL? Engage emotionally with us for a few moments and try to articulate the impact of these verses on you at the heart level today.