



Kingdom Wisdom

The Consequences of Foolish Indifference

Matthew 11:20-24

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/is-everyone-punished-the-same-in-hell>

<https://learn.ligonier.org/sermons/woes-jesus>

Sermon Outline:

Matthew 11:20-24

1. Revelation Anticipates Repentance. V. 20
2. Greater Revelation Accrues Greater Accountability. Vv. 21, 23
3. Rejection of Revelation Accumulates Greater Judgment. Vv. 22, 24

Matthew 11:20-24

The Unrepenting Cities

20 Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.

21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.

23 And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.

24 Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you."

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 11:20-24.

INTRODUCTION

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

1. Have you ever missed a turn while on a trip somewhere? What caused you to miss your turn, and what did it take to get back on track? Were there any consequences due to your missed turn?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. Revelation Anticipates Repentance. V. 20

2. What was the main reason that Jesus worked miracles during His ministry on earth? What was His desired result in the lives of those who saw them?

3. Why does God call His people to tell others the gospel of His Word? What is God revealing to people through His Word?

(God calls all believers to tell others the gospel, because He wants people to know Him and be saved by Him. That is what He is revealing through His Word... Himself. And the gospel is His way of restoring the relationship with Him that we broke by our sin.)

4. What is repentance, and why is it the only acceptable response to God's revelation of Himself and the gospel? What are we saying when we don't repent in response to God's revelation of Himself and the gospel?

II. Greater Revelation Accrues Greater Accountability. Vv. 21, 23

5. Why was Jesus pronouncing woes onto the Jewish cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum? Why was it scandalous that He compared them to Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom?

6. What is Jesus communicating by comparing Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum to Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom? What are some examples of greater knowledge requiring greater accountability/responsibility today?

(Everyone is held accountable to the innate knowledge they have of God and His righteousness (Rom. 1). But the more you know, the higher the accountability/responsibility there is to conform to His righteousness, because the more you know, and yet still reject, the more high-handed and prideful your rebellion is against God. This is why mere indifference to great revelation is more accountable to God than ignorant sinning.)

7. What group of people in modern society has the greatest accountability/responsibility to God? Why is it important that we as Christians hear this comparison that Jesus made and consider our own lives and abide in repentant faith?

III. Rejection of Revelation Accumulates Greater Judgment. Vv. 22, 24

8. What is Jesus communicating about the nature of judgment in vv. 22 and 24? What does Luke 12:47-48 and Romans 2:4-5 add to Christ's teaching about degrees of punishment we find here in Matthew?

(Scripture never tells us the exact nature of the punishment of God's judgment. It uses the language of 'lake of fire', 'eternal flames', etc. It does make clear that it will be a place of eternal punishment, and it also teaches that there are degrees of that punishment dependent on the heinousness or highhanded nature of one's sins. That is what Jesus is pointing to here in Matthew 11, which He also points to in Luke 12, and Paul points out in Romans 2... and these are only just a few texts that teach this doctrine.)

9. As Christians who will not experience the punishment of God at judgment day only because of the blood of Christ, how should we take this warning?

(While we will not be condemned on judgment day (Rom. 8:1) there is a real sense of being judged according to our deeds. When Christ judges believers, it will not be for condemnation, but for giving or withholding rewards (2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10). Therefore, this warning reminds us that there are degrees of punishment for unbelievers, and there are degrees of rewards for believers.)

10. How should the teaching on degrees of punishment for unbelievers affect our heart for evangelizing the lost?

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Matt. 11:20–24 Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were the cities in which most of Jesus' miracles were performed, and yet their occupants rejected Jesus' mission and remained unrepentant. For Bethsaida and Capernaum, see notes on Mark 1:21; Luke 9:10. Chorazin has been identified with Khirbet Karazeh, just northwest of Capernaum. Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities in Phoenicia (see Mark 7:24) and were often the object of condemnation by OT prophets for their Baal worship and arrogant materialism. Sodom was the epitome of a "city of sin." Yet, Jesus says, even Sodom would have repented if it had witnessed his miracles and the reality of the kingdom.