

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

JANUARY 1-7

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | MATTHEW 1-3

"The Kingdom of the Heavens Has Drawn Near"

(Matthew 3:1, 2) In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Ju-de'a, ² saying: "Repent, for the Kingdom of the heavens has drawn near."

nwtsty study notes on Mt 3:1, 2

preaching: The Greek word basically means "to make proclamation as a public messenger." It stresses the *manner* of the proclamation: usually an open, public declaration rather than a sermon to a group.

Kingdom: First occurrence of the Greek word *ba-si-lei'a*, which refers to a royal government as well as to the territory and peoples under the rule of a king. Of the 162 occurrences of this Greek word in the Christian Greek Scriptures, 55 can be found in Matthew's account and most of them refer to God's heavenly rule. Matthew uses the term so frequently that his Gospel might be called the Kingdom Gospel.

Kingdom of the heavens: This expression occurs some 30 times and only in the Gospel of Matthew. In the Gospels of Mark and Luke, the parallel phrase "the Kingdom of God" is used, indicating that "the Kingdom of God" is based in and rules from the spiritual heavens.—Mt 21:43; Mr 1:15; Lu 4:43; Da 2:44; 2Ti 4:18.

has drawn near: Here in the sense that the future Ruler of the heavenly Kingdom was about to appear.

(Matthew 3:4) Now John was clothed with camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.

nwtsty media

John the Baptizer's Clothing and Appearance

John wore a garment that was woven from camel's hair and was secured at the waist by a leather belt, or girdle, that could be used to carry small items. Similar clothing was worn by the prophet Elijah. (2Ki 1:8) Camel's haircloth was a rough fabric commonly worn by the poor. By contrast, soft garments made of silk or linen were worn by the rich. (Mt 11:7-9) Because John was a Nazirite from birth, it is possible that his hair had never been cut. His dress and appearance likely made it immediately apparent that he lived a simple life, completely devoted to doing God's will.

Locusts

As used in the Bible, the term "locusts" can refer to any of a variety of grasshoppers with short antennae, or feelers, especially grasshoppers that migrate in great swarms. According to an analysis made in Jerusalem, desert locusts consist of 75 percent protein. When used for food today, the head, legs, wings, and abdomen are removed. The remaining portion, the thorax, is eaten raw or cooked. These insects are said to taste something like shrimp or crab and are rich in protein.

Wild Honey

Pictured here are a hive built by wild honey bees (1) and a honey-filled comb (2). The honey that John ate may have been produced by a wild species of bee known as *Apis mellifera syriaca*, which is native to the area. This aggressive species is well-adapted to living in the hot, dry climate of the Judean wilderness but is not suited to being farmed by man. However, as early as the ninth century B.C.E., people living in Israel kept honey bees in clay cylinders. A large number of the remains of these hives were discovered in the middle of what was an urban area (now known as Tel Rehov), located in the Jordan Valley. Honey from these hives was

produced by a species of bee that seems to have been imported from what is now known as Turkey.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Matthew 1:3) Judah became father to Pe'rez and Ze'rah by Ta'mar; Pe'rez became father to Hez'ron; Hez'ron became father to Ram;

nwtsty study note on Mt 1:3

Tamar: The first of five women listed in Matthew's genealogy of the Messiah. The other four are Rahab and Ruth, both non-Israelite women (vs. 5); Bath-sheba, "the wife of Uriah" (vs. 6); and Mary (vs. 16). These women are likely included in an otherwise all-male genealogy because there is something outstanding in the way each one came to be an ancestress of Jesus.

(Matthew 3:11) I, for my part, baptize you with water because of your repentance, but the one coming after me is stronger than I am, whose sandals I am not worthy to take off. That one will baptize you with holy spirit and with fire.

nwtsty study note on Mt 3:11

baptize you: Or "immerse you." The Greek word *ba-pti'zo* means "to dip; to plunge." Other Biblical references indicate that baptism involves complete immersion. On one occasion, John was baptizing at a location in the Jordan Valley near Salim "because there was a great quantity of water there." (Joh 3:23) When Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, they both "went down into the water." (Ac 8:38) The same Greek word is used in the *Septuagint* at 2Ki 5:14 when describing that Naaman "plunged into the Jordan seven times."

Bible Reading

(Matthew 1:1-17) The book of the history of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham: ² Abraham became father to Isaac; Isaac be-

came father to Jacob; Jacob became father to Judah and his brothers; ³ Judah became father to Pe'rez and Ze'rah by Ta'mar; Pe'rez became father to Hez'ron; Hez'ron became father to Ram; ⁴ Ram became father to Am-min'a-dab; Am-min'a-dab became father to Nah'shon; Nah'shon became father to Sal'mon; ⁵ Sal'mon became father to Bo'az by Ra'hab; Bo'az became father to O'bed by Ruth; O'bed became father to Jes'se; ⁶ Jes'se became father to David the king. David became father to Sol'o-mon by the wife of U-ri'ah; ⁷ Sol'o-mon became father to Re-ho-bo'am; Re-ho-bo'am became father to A-bi'jah; A-bi'jah became father to A'sa; ⁸ A'sa became father to Je-hosh'a-phat; Je-hosh'a-phat became father to Je-ho'ram; Je-ho'ram became father to Uz-z'i'ah; ⁹ Uz-z'i'ah became father to Jo'tham; Jo'tham became father to A'haz; A'haz became father to Hez-e-ki'ah; ¹⁰ Hez-e-ki'ah became father to Ma-nas'seh; Ma-nas'seh became father to A'mon; A'mon became father to Jo-si'ah; ¹¹ Jo-si'ah became father to Jec-o-ni'ah and to his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon. ¹² After the deportation to Babylon, Jec-o-ni'ah became father to She-al'ti-el; She-al'ti-el became father to Ze-rub'ba-bel; ¹³ Ze-rub'ba-bel became father to A-bi'ud; A-bi'ud became father to E-li'a-kim; E-li'a-kim became father to A'zor; ¹⁴ A'zor became father to Za'dok; Za'dok became father to A'chim; A'chim became father to E-li'ud; ¹⁵ E-li'ud became father to El-e-a'zar; El-e-a'zar became father to Mat'than; Mat'than became father to Jacob; ¹⁶ Jacob became father to Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. ¹⁷ All the generations, then, from Abraham until David were 14 generations; from David until the deportation to Babylon, 14 generations; from the deportation to Babylon until the Christ, 14 generations.

JANUARY 8-14

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | MATTHEW 4-5

"Lessons Learned From Jesus' Sermon on the Mount"

(Matthew 5:3) "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need, since the Kingdom of the heavens belongs to them.

nwtsty study note on Mt 5:3

Happy: Not simply a state of lightheartedness, as when a person is enjoying a good time. Rather, when used of humans, it refers to the condition of one who is blessed by God and enjoys his favor. The term is also used as a description of God and of Jesus in his heavenly glory.—1Ti 1:11; 6:15.

those conscious of their spiritual need: The Greek expression rendered "those conscious," literally, "those who are poor (needy; destitute; beggars)," in this context is used about those who have a need and are intensely aware of it. The same word is used in reference to the "beggar" Lazarus at Lu 16:20, 22. The Greek phrase that some translations render those who are "poor in spirit" conveys the idea of people who are painfully aware of their spiritual poverty and of their need for God.

(Matthew 5:7) "Happy are the merciful, since they will be shown mercy.

nwtsty study note on Mt 5:7

merciful: The use of the Bible terms rendered "merciful" and "mercy" is not limited to forgiveness or leniency in judgment. It most often describes the feelings of compassion and pity that move a person to take the initiative to assist those in need.

(Matthew 5:9) "Happy are the peacemakers, since they will be called sons of God.

nwtsty study note on Mt 5:9

peacemakers: Those who not only maintain peace but also bring peace to where it is lacking.

w07 12/1 17

Teach Your Child to Be Peaceable

Christian parents are keenly interested in training their children to "seek peace and pursue it." (1 Peter 3:11) The happiness that results from being a peacemaker is worth all the effort needed to conquer feelings of suspicion, frustration, and animosity.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Matthew 4:9) And he said to him: "All these things I will give you if you fall down and do an act of worship to me."

nwtsty study note on Mt 4:9

do an act of worship: The Greek verb that can be rendered "to worship" is here in the aorist tense, which indicates a momentary action. Rendering it "do an act of worship" shows that the Devil did not ask Jesus to do constant or continuous worship to him; it was a single "act of worship."

(Matthew 4:23) Then he went throughout the whole of Gal'i-lee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the good news of the Kingdom and curing every sort of disease and every sort of infirmity among the people.

nwtsty study note on Mt 4:23

teaching . . . preaching: Teaching differs from preaching in that the teacher does more than proclaim; he instructs, explains, uses persuasive arguments, and offers proof.

Bible Reading

(Matthew 5:31-48) "Moreover, it was said: 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' ³² However, I say to you that everyone divorcing his wife, except

JANUARY 15-21

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | MATTHEW 6-7

"Keep On Seeking First the Kingdom"

(Matthew 6:10) Let your Kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also on earth.

bhs 178 ¶12

The Privilege of Prayer

12 What should be most important in our prayers? Jehovah and his will. We should thank him from our heart for everything he has done for us. (1 Chronicles 29:10-13) We know this because when Jesus was on earth, he taught his disciples how to pray. **(Read Matthew 6:9-13.)** He said that they should first pray for God's name to be sanctified, that is, treated as sacred or holy. Then Jesus showed that we should pray for God's Kingdom to come and for Jehovah's will to be done all over the earth. It was only after praying for those very important things that Jesus said that we should pray for our personal needs. When we put Jehovah and his will first in our prayers, we show what is most important to us.

(Matthew 6:24) "No one can slave for two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stick to the one and despise the other. You cannot slave for God and for Riches.

nwtsty study note on Mt 6:24

slave: The Greek verb refers to working as a slave, that is, someone owned by only one master. Jesus was here stating that a Christian cannot give God the exclusive devotion that He deserves and at the same time be devoted to gathering material possessions.

(Matthew 6:33) "Keep on, then, seeking first the Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you.

on account of sexual immorality, makes her a subject for adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. ³³ "Again you heard that it was said to those of ancient times: 'You must not swear without performing, but you must pay your vows to Jehovah.' ³⁴ However, I say to you: Do not swear at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵ nor by earth, for it is the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Do not swear by your head, since you cannot turn one hair white or black. ³⁷ Just let your word 'Yes' mean yes, your 'No,' no, for what goes beyond these is from the wicked one. ³⁸ "You heard that it was said: 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.' ³⁹ However, I say to you: Do not resist the one who is wicked, but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other also to him. ⁴⁰ And if a person wants to take you to court and get possession of your inner garment, let him also have your outer garment; ⁴¹ and if someone in authority compels you into service for a mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one asking you, and do not turn away from one who wants to borrow from you. ⁴³ "You heard that it was said: 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ However, I say to you: Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may prove yourselves sons of your Father who is in the heavens, since he makes his sun rise on both the wicked and the good and makes it rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those loving you, what reward do you have? Are not also the tax collectors doing the same thing? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brothers only, what extraordinary thing are you doing? Are not also the people of the nations doing the same thing? ⁴⁸ You must accordingly be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

nwtsty study note on Mt 6:33

Keep on . . . seeking: The Greek verb form indicates continuous action and could be rendered “Seek continually.” Jesus’ true followers would not seek the Kingdom for a time and then go on to other things. Rather, they must always make it their first concern in life.

the Kingdom: Some ancient Greek manuscripts read “God’s Kingdom.”

his: Refers to God, the “heavenly Father” mentioned at Mt 6:32.

righteousness: Those who seek God’s righteousness readily do his will and conform to his standards of right and wrong. This teaching stood in stark contrast with that of the Pharisees, who sought to establish their own righteousness.—Mt 5:20.

w16.07 12 ¶18

Seek the Kingdom, Not Things

18 Read Matthew 6:33. Christ’s disciples must always make the Kingdom their first concern in life. If we do that, then, as Jesus said, “all these other things will be added” to us. Why could he say that? He explained in the preceding verse: “Your heavenly Father *knows* that you need all these things,” meaning the necessities of life. Jehovah can easily anticipate our individual needs regarding food, clothing, and shelter, even before we become aware of them. (Phil. 4: 19) He knows which piece of our clothing will wear out next. He knows what our dietary requirements are and what would be adequate shelter for us, given the size of our family. Jehovah will see to it that we have what we really need.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Matthew 7:12) “All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must do to them. This, in fact, is what the Law and the Prophets mean.

w14 5/15 14-15 ¶14-16

Follow the Golden Rule in Your Ministry

14 Imagine that one day we receive a phone call but do not recognize the caller’s voice. He is a stranger, but he asks a question about the types of food we prefer. We wonder who the caller is and what he really wants. Out of politeness, perhaps we might briefly converse with him, but then we would likely indicate that we prefer to end the conversation. On the other hand, imagine that the caller identifies himself, lets us know that he works in the field of nutrition, and kindly tells us that he has some helpful information. We would probably be more receptive. After all, we appreciate it when people are straightforward yet tactful when approaching us. How can we extend the same courtesy to those we meet in our ministry?

15 In many territories, we need to make the purpose of our visit clear to the householder. True, we have valuable information the householder does not have, but suppose we did not really introduce ourselves and merely began our presentation abruptly with a question like this: “If you could solve any problem in the world, what would it be?” We know that the purpose behind such a question is to find out what is on the person’s mind and then direct the conversation to the Bible. However, the householder might wonder: ‘Who is this stranger, and why is he asking me this question? What is this all about?’ So we should try to put the householder at ease. (Phil. 2:3, 4) How can we do so?

16 One traveling overseer has found the following approach to be effective. After exchanging greetings, he hands the householder a copy of the tract *Would You Like to Know the Truth?* and says: “We’re giving one of these to everyone in the area today. It discusses six questions that many people ask. Here is your copy.” The brother reports that most people seem to relax a bit once they know the purpose of the visit. At

that point, it is often easier to get a conversation under way. The traveling overseer next asks the person: “Have you ever thought about any of these questions?” If the householder chooses one, the brother opens the tract and discusses what the Bible says about that question. Otherwise, he selects a question and continues the discussion without putting the householder on the spot. Of course, there are many ways to start a conversation. In some areas, householders may expect more formalities before we get to the point of our visit. The key is to adjust our presentation to the way that people in our area likely want to be approached.

(Matthew 7:28, 29) When Jesus finished these sayings, the effect was that the crowds were astounded at his way of teaching, ²⁹ for he was teaching them as a person having authority, and not as their scribes.

nwtsty study notes on Mt 7:28, 29

were astounded: The Greek verb used here can be defined “to be filled with amazement to the point of being overwhelmed.” The continuous verb form implies that his words had a lasting effect on the crowds.

his way of teaching: This expression refers to how Jesus taught, his teaching methods, which included what he taught, the whole body of instruction in the Sermon on the Mount.

not as their scribes: Rather than quote revered rabbis as an authority, as was the scribes’ custom, Jesus speaks as Jehovah’s representative, **as a person having authority**, basing his teachings on God’s Word.—Joh 7:16.

Bible Reading

(Matthew 6:1-18) “Take care not to practice your righteousness in front of men to be noticed by them; otherwise you will have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens. ² So when you make gifts of mercy, do

not blow a trumpet ahead of you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ³ But you, when making gifts of mercy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your gifts of mercy may be in secret. Then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you. ⁵ “Also, when you pray, do not act like the hypocrites, for they like to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the main streets to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your private room and, after shutting your door, pray to your Father who is in secret. Then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you. ⁷ When praying, do not say the same things over and over again as the people of the nations do, for they imagine they will get a hearing for their use of many words. ⁸ So do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need even before you ask him. ⁹ “You must pray, then, this way: “‘Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. ¹⁰ Let your Kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also on earth. ¹¹ Give us today our bread for this day; ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the wicked one.’ ¹⁴ “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵ whereas if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. ¹⁶ “When you fast, stop becoming sad-faced like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so they may appear to men to be fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ¹⁷ But you, when fasting, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that you may not appear to be fasting

to men but only to your Father who is in secret. Then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you.

JANUARY 22-28

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | MATTHEW 8-9

“Jesus Loved People”

(Matthew 8:1-3) After he came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him.² And look! a leper came up and did obeisance to him, saying: “Lord, if you just want to, you can make me clean.”³ So stretching out his hand, he touched him, saying: “I want to! Be made clean.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed away.

nwtsty study note on Mt 8:3

he touched him: The Mosaic Law required that lepers be quarantined to protect others from contamination. (Le 13:45, 46; Nu 5:1-4) However, Jewish religious leaders imposed additional rules. For example, no one was to come within four cubits, that is, about 1.8 m (6 ft) of a leper, but on windy days, the distance was 100 cubits, that is, about 45 m (150 ft). Such rules led to heartless treatment of lepers. Tradition speaks favorably of a rabbi who hid from lepers and of another who threw stones at them to keep them at a distance. By contrast, Jesus was so deeply moved by the leper's plight that he did what other Jews would consider unthinkable—he touched the man. He did so even though he could have cured the leper with just a word.—Mt 8:5-12.

I want to: Jesus not only acknowledged the request but expressed a strong desire to respond to it, showing that he was motivated by more than just a sense of duty.

(Matthew 9:9-13) Next, while moving on from there, Jesus caught sight of a man

named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him: “Be my follower.” At that he rose up and followed him.¹⁰ Later as he was dining in the house, look! many tax collectors and sinners came and began dining with Jesus and his disciples.¹¹ But on seeing this, the Pharisees said to his disciples: “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”¹² Hearing them, he said: “Healthy people do not need a physician, but those who are ill do.¹³ Go, then, and learn what this means: ‘I want mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came to call, not righteous people, but sinners.”

nwtsty study note on Mt 9:10

dining: Or “reclining at the table.” To recline with someone at a table indicated close fellowship with that person. Thus, Jews in Jesus' day would normally never have reclined at the table, or taken a meal, with non-Jews.

tax collectors: Many Jews collected taxes for the Roman authorities. People hated such Jews because they not only collaborated with a resented foreign power but also extorted more than the official tax rate. Tax collectors were generally shunned by fellow Jews, who put them on the same level as sinners and prostitutes.—Mt 11:19; 21:32.

(Matthew 9:35-38) And Jesus set out on a tour of all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the good news of the Kingdom and curing every sort of disease and every sort of infirmity.³⁶ On seeing the crowds, he felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd.³⁷ Then he said to his disciples: “Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few.³⁸ Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.”

nwtsty study note on Mt 9:36

felt pity: The Greek verb *splag·khni'zo-mai* used for this expression is related to the word for “intestines” (*splag'khna*), denoting a feeling experienced deep inside the body, an intense emotion. It is one of the strongest words in Greek for the feeling of compassion.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Matthew 8:8-10) The army officer replied: “Sir, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but just say the word and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I too am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” ¹⁰ When Jesus heard that, he was amazed and said to those following him: “I tell you the truth, with no one in Israel have I found so great a faith.

w02 8/15 13 ¶16

“I Set the Pattern for You”

¹⁶ Similarly, when an army officer—perhaps a Gentile, a Roman—approached and asked Jesus to cure an ailing slave, Jesus knew that the soldier had faults. An army officer of those days would likely have a past littered with many acts of violence, bloodshed, and false worship. Yet, Jesus focused on something good—the man’s outstanding faith. (Matthew 8:5-13) Later, when Jesus spoke to the evildoer who was hanging on the torture stake next to him, Jesus did not rebuke the man for his criminal past but encouraged him with a hope for the future. (Luke 23:43) Jesus knew well that taking a negative, critical view of others would only serve to discourage them. No doubt his efforts to find the good in others encouraged many to do even better.

(Matthew 9:16, 17) Nobody sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old outer garment, for the new piece pulls away from the garment

and the tear becomes worse. ¹⁷ Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins. If they do, then the wineskins burst and the wine spills out and the wineskins are ruined. But people put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

jy 70 ¶16

Why Do Jesus’ Disciples Not Fast?

Jesus is helping the disciples of John the Baptist to appreciate that no one should expect Jesus’ followers to conform to the old practices of Judaism, such as ritual fasting. He did not come to patch up and prolong an old, worn-out way of worship, a whole system of worship that was ready to be discarded. The worship that Jesus is encouraging is not one that conforms to the Judaism of the day with its traditions of men. No, he is not trying to put a new patch on an old garment or new wine into a stiff, old wineskin.

Bible Reading

(Matthew 8:1-17) After he came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him.

² And look! a leper came up and did obeisance to him, saying: “Lord, if you just want to, you can make me clean.” ³ So stretching out his hand, he touched him, saying: “I want to! Be made clean.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed away. ⁴ Then Jesus said to him: “See that you tell no one, but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses appointed, for a witness to them.” ⁵ When he entered Ca-per’na-um, an army officer came to him, pleading with him ⁶ and saying: “Sir, my servant is laid up in the house with paralysis, and he is suffering terribly.” ⁷ He said to him: “When I get there, I will cure him.”

⁸ The army officer replied: “Sir, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but just say the word and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I too am a man under authority, hav-

ing soldiers under me, and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." ¹⁰ When Jesus heard that, he was amazed and said to those following him: "I tell you the truth, with no one in Israel have I found so great a faith. ¹¹ But I tell you that many from east and west will come and recline at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of the heavens; ¹² whereas the sons of the Kingdom will be thrown into the darkness outside. There is where their weeping and the gnashing of their teeth will be." ¹³ Then Jesus said to the army officer: "Go. Just as you have shown faith, so let it come to pass for you." And the servant was healed in that hour. ¹⁴ And Jesus, on coming into Peter's house, saw his mother-in-law lying down and sick with fever. ¹⁵ So he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began ministering to him. ¹⁶ But after it became evening, people brought him many demon-possessed ones; and he expelled the spirits with a word, and he cured all who were suffering, ¹⁷ in order to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "He himself took our sicknesses and carried our diseases."

JANUARY 29–FEBRUARY 4

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | MATTHEW 10-11

"Jesus Offered Refreshment"

(Matthew 10:29, 30) Two sparrows sell for a coin of small value, do they not? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

nwtsty study notes on Mt 10:29, 30

sparrows: The Greek word *strou-thi'on* is a diminutive form meaning any small bird, but it

often referred to sparrows, the cheapest of all birds sold as food.

for a coin of small value: Lit., "for an assarion," which was the wage a man earned for 45 minutes' work. (See App. B14.) On this occasion, during his third Galilean tour, Jesus says that **two** sparrows cost an assarion. On another occasion, evidently about a year later during his ministry in Judea, Jesus says that five sparrows could be obtained for double this price. (Lu 12:6) Comparing these accounts, we learn that sparrows were of such little value to the merchants that the fifth one would be included free of charge.

even the hairs of your head are all numbered: The number of hairs on the human head is said to average more than 100,000. Jehovah's intimate knowledge of such minute details guarantees that he is keenly interested in each follower of Christ.

nwtsty media Sparrow

Sparrows were the cheapest of all birds sold as food. Two of them could be purchased with the amount a man earned working for 45 minutes. The Greek term could embrace a variety of small birds, including a common house sparrow (*Passer domesticus biblicus*) and the Spanish sparrow (*Passer hispaniolensis*), which are still abundant in Israel.

(Matthew 11:28) Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you.

nwtsty study note on Mt 11:28

loaded down: Those whom Jesus beckons to come were "loaded down" by anxiety and toil. Their worship of Jehovah had become burdensome because of the human traditions that had been added to the Law of Moses. (Mt 23:4) Even the Sabbath, which was meant to be a source of refreshment, had become a burden. —Ex 23:12; Mr 2:23-28; Lu 6:1-11.

I will refresh you: The Greek word for “refresh” can refer both to rest (Mt 26:45; Mr 6:31) and to relief from toil in order to recover and regain strength (2Co 7:13; Phm 7). The context shows that taking on Jesus’ “yoke” (Mt 11:29) would involve service, not rest. The active Greek verb with Jesus as the subject conveys the thought of his rejuvenating and energizing weary ones so that they would desire to take up his light and kindly yoke.

(Matthew 11:29, 30) Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for yourselves.³⁰ For my yoke is kindly, and my load is light.”

nwtsty study note on Mt 11:29

Take my yoke upon you: Jesus used “yoke” figuratively in the sense of submission to authority and direction. If he had in mind a double yoke, one that God placed upon Jesus, then he would be inviting his disciples to get under the yoke *with him* and he would assist them. In that case, the phrase could be rendered: “Get under my yoke with me.” If the yoke is one that Jesus himself puts on others, then the reference is to submitting oneself to Christ’s authority and direction as his disciple.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Matthew 11:2, 3) But John, having heard in jail about the works of the Christ, sent his disciples³ to ask him: “Are you the Coming One, or are we to expect a different one?”

jy 96 ¶12-3

John Wants to Hear From Jesus

Does that seem to be a strange question? John is a devoted man who, when baptizing Jesus nearly two years before, saw God’s spirit descend upon Jesus and heard God’s voice of approval. We have no reason to think that John’s faith has grown weak. Otherwise, Jesus would not speak so highly of John, as he

does on this occasion. But if John is not having doubts, why does he ask this question of Jesus?

John may simply want verification directly from Jesus that he is the Messiah. This would strengthen John as he languishes in prison. And John’s question apparently has an added sense. He is acquainted with the Bible prophecies that show that the Anointed One of God is to be a king and a deliverer. Yet, many months after Jesus was baptized, John is in prison. So John is asking if there is to be another one coming, a successor to Jesus, as it were, who will complete the fulfillment of all that the Messiah was foretold to accomplish.

(Matthew 11:16-19) “With whom will I compare this generation? It is like young children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to their playmates,¹⁷ saying: ‘We played the flute for you, but you did not dance; we wailed, but you did not beat yourselves in grief.’¹⁸ Likewise, John came neither eating nor drinking, but people say, ‘He has a demon.’¹⁹ The Son of man did come eating and drinking, but people say, ‘Look! A man who is a glutton and is given to drinking wine, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ All the same, wisdom is proved righteous by its works.”

jy 98 ¶1-2

Woe to an Unresponsive Generation

Jesus has high regard for John the Baptist, but how do most people regard John? “This generation,” Jesus declares, “is like young children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to their playmates, saying: ‘We played the flute for you, but you did not dance; we wailed, but you did not beat yourselves in grief.’”—Matthew 11: 16, 17.

What does Jesus mean? He clarifies the thought: “John came neither eating nor drinking, but people say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son

of man did come eating and drinking, but people say, 'Look! A man who is a glutton and is given to drinking wine, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'" (Matthew 11:18, 19) On the one hand, John has lived a simple life as a Nazirite, even abstaining from wine, yet this generation says he is demonized. (Numbers 6:2, 3; Luke 1: 15) On the other hand, Jesus lives like other men. He eats and drinks in a balanced way, but he is accused of going to excess. It seems impossible to satisfy the people.

Bible Reading

(Matthew 11:1-19) When Jesus had finished giving instructions to his 12 disciples, he set out from there to teach and preach in their cities. ² But John, having heard in jail about the works of the Christ, sent his disciples ³ to ask him: "Are you the Coming One, or are we to expect a different one?" ⁴ In reply Jesus said to them: "Go and report to John what you are hearing and seeing: ⁵ The blind are now seeing and the lame are walking, the lepers are being cleansed and the deaf are hearing, the dead are being raised up and the poor are being told the good news. ⁶ Happy is the one who finds no cause for stumbling in me." ⁷ While these were on their way, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed being tossed by the wind? ⁸ What, then, did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft garments? Why, those wearing soft garments are in the houses of kings. ⁹ Really, then, why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and far more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written: 'Look! I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way ahead of you!' ¹¹ Truly I say to you, among those born of women, there has not been raised up anyone greater than John the Baptist, but a lesser person in the

Kingdom of the heavens is greater than he is. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of the heavens is the goal toward which men press, and those pressing forward are seizing it. ¹³ For all, the Prophets and the Law, prophesied until John; ¹⁴ and if you are willing to accept it, he is 'E-li'jah who is to come.' ¹⁵ Let the one who has ears listen. ¹⁶ "With whom will I compare this generation? It is like young children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to their playmates, ¹⁷ saying: 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance; we wailed, but you did not beat yourselves in grief.' ¹⁸ Likewise, John came neither eating nor drinking, but people say, 'He has a demon.' ¹⁹ The Son of man did come eating and drinking, but people say, 'Look! A man who is a glutton and is given to drinking wine, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' All the same, wisdom is proved righteous by its works."