

11:16 *This generation*- The Lord several times spoke of that entire generation as sinful and unresponsive to the Gospel. Yet the context here is talking of John the Baptist's work. This therefore was a tacit recognition that John's ministry had been unsuccessful in terms of converting all Israel, and therefore clearly there was to be a change in the prophetic program. As noted earlier in commentary on this chapter, it was this change in the prophetic program which was worrying John, even though unnecessarily in terms of his own salvation.

Children sitting- John's ministry was like children wanting to play funerals, and taking the initiative by beginning with mock weeping- but not getting any response. The Lord's ministry was as children wanting to play weddings, piping to the other children, who would not respond by dancing. Note that in 10:42 the Lord has likened His preachers to little children. Children were considered non-persons in society, and yet the Lord uses children in this parable as representative of His preachers. We note that although He likened them to children, He had to sternly warn them that they still needed to be converted and become *as* children (Mt. 18:3). We see Him so often imputing status to His followers which they had not in reality attained. This is to help us appreciate how He can impute righteousness to we who are not righteous. The parable of preaching here pictures children appealing to children. The commonality between us and our audience is very attractive and persuasive. We are humans reaching out to humans, indeed, children to children; the children called out (cp. calling out the Gospel) to "their *fellows*".

In the markets- The town square. The Lord uses the same word in the parable of Mt. 20:3, where the call of the Gospel comes to men who are standing idle in the market place (s.w.). The picture is perhaps of society getting on with its existence, but the weak labourers and the children being left to one side, excluded from standard adult social and economic life. And it is to these that the call of the Gospel comes, in the midst of human busyness.

11:17 The Old Testament as well as the New is written in such a way as to encourage memorization, although this is often masked by the translation. There are several devices commonly used to assist in this. Not least is alliteration, i.e. similarly sounding syllables. "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced (*orchee-sasthe*); we have mourned unto you and ye have not lamented (*ekop-sasthe*)" (Mt. 11:17) could be dynamically rendered: 'We piped for you, and you never **stept**; we dirged for you, and you never **wept**'. We note that the Lord parallels the work of the children John's 'children' or disciples, and His. Although both of them were somewhat negative about each other, the Lord saw both groups of children as doing the same work, despite a different culture and even doctrinal emphasis. The division in the town square was between the children begging the others to respond, and the children of this world who didn't want to, in the midst of those who didn't even have ears to hear and were just getting on with their worldly business and never 'heard' the invitation from either group of children.

Not danced- The Lord was speaking this whilst the disciples were away on their preaching tour. He could say that just as John's preparation of the way had not been responded to on the level of the whole "generation" or society, neither had His more upbeat and joyful invitation been

accepted. Note that the call of the Gospel is a call to engage with the preacher, to dance in response to the tune piped. Community and fellowship are all part of response to the Gospel; it's not about delivering truths to an individual who then accepts them and has no further relationship with the preacher. This is why the father-son analogy is used for preaching and conversion later in the NT. There is the implication too that the initial preacher continues to call the tune, to direct the dancing of the convert, even after initial acceptance of the invitation.

Not lamented- Remember that the Lord is addressing those who had gone out to hear John preach (:7-9). He is implying that they had not actually responded to his call to them.

11:18 *He has a demon-*The Gospels give the impression that there was mass response to John's preaching, but according to the Lord's reasoning here, He felt that "this generation", society as a whole, had rejected John's message and slandered him as in league with demons. Exactly the same was said about the ministry of Jesus (Jn. 8:48 uses the same term about Jesus- "He has a demon"). Surface level interest in the message, even applauding it and making a great effort to go out into the desert to hear it preached, was and is not the same as responding in real repentance.

11:19 *Gluttonous... drunkard-* The Lord was accused of being a drunkard, a glutton, and a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Mt. 11:19; Lk. 7:34). This is all language reminiscent of the commands for the parents to slay the 'rebellious son' of Dt. 21:18-21. It's conceivable that one of the reasons why His death was demanded was because of this. Hence His relatives sought to take Him away out of public sight. It's also been claimed that the Jews' complaint that Jesus 'made Himself equal to the Father' (Jn. 5:18) is alluding to a rabbinic expression which speaks of the 'rebellious son' of Dt. 21 as being a son who makes himself equal to his father. The shame of being Jesus' mother eventually wore off upon Mary, or so it seems to me. Just as the shame of standing up for Christian principles can wear us down, too. In passing, note that the prodigal son is likewise cast in the role of the 'rebellious son' who should be killed; the correspondence suggests that the Lord Jesus can identify with sinners like the prodigal because He was treated *as if* He were a sinner, a rebellious son; even though He was not in actuality.

The criticisms of the Lord here were all related to His drinking, eating and table company. Jesus showed by His fellowship with "the poor in spirit" that He meant what He said. He, as God's Son, extended His Father's fellowship to them in the here and now of this life. Luke seems to have been especially perceptive of the fact that Jesus often accepted invitations to eat with those whom others despised (Lk. 5:29; 7:36; 10:38; 11:37; 14:1). In 1st century Palestine, to eat with someone was a religious act. The host blessed and broke the bread and then broke off a piece for each guest, thus binding together all present. This was why the many sects of Judaism carefully limited their table fellowship (notably the Pharisees and Essenes). Thus it was the Lord's desire to share table fellowship with the very lowest (apparently) within the community of God that brought Him such criticism (Mt. 11:19; Mk. 2:16). His teaching also made it plain that He saw table fellowship with Him at a meal as a type of the future Messianic banquet, to be enjoyed in

His Kingdom at His return, when redeemed sinners will again sit and eat with Him (Lk. 22:29,30). To accept the gift of the bread of life at the breaking of bread is to symbolize our acceptance of the life that is in Him. If we believe what we are doing at the memorial meeting, we are showing our acceptance of the fact that we will be there, and that what we are doing in our humble breakings of bread is in fact a true foretaste of the Kingdom experience which awaits us.

A friend- The Lord was 'fond' [*philos*] of sinners; He liked them and their company. In this we see His greatness, for most spiritual people admit to finding the company of the unspiritual somewhat of a burden. But the Lord's spirituality was beyond that. Truly He is the sinners' friend.

Wisdom is justified of her children- Appreciating the inter-relation between 'doctrine' and practice will result in our seeing through the fallacy that because someone's deeds are good, therefore it doesn't matter too much about their doctrine. The spiritual fruit which God seeks is that which is brought forth by the seed of His word, the Gospel. To *really* understand the basic Gospel with one's heart is to bring forth fruit, to be converted. True wisdom is justified by the works she brings forth (Mt. 11:19). This is why true conversion involves understanding and perceiving, and not merely hearing doctrinal truth (Mt. 13:15). Yet the counter argument would be that there are people who know God's truth who behave poorly, and there are those who know little of it who act well. This is why the Lord speaks of "wisdom", not "truth"; for wisdom is God's truth applied in practice.

On another level, we see here the Lord's response to slander, both of Himself and John. Wisdom is justified of her children- in the end. The "children" are those of Himself and John, who have just featured in His parable of the preachers, His children, meeting lack of response in the town square. Even if there is lack of response to the invitation, the Lord was confident that both His 'children' (the "little ones" of Mt. 10:42) and John's would be the justification of the truth and wisdom which they were teaching. This is all a comfort to those undergoing slander. In the end, if we are on the side of wisdom, we shall be justified.

11:20 *Upbraided-* The Lord also upbraided the disciples for their unbelief (Mk. 16:14 s.w.). Again we see the Lord being positive towards His disciples in the eyes of the world, and yet privately challenging them with the same language of criticism which He had for the unbelieving world. His imputation of righteousness to us doesn't mean He is blind to our weakness.

Most- Gk. 'the majority'. We must give this word its full weight. The majority of the Lord's miracles were done in three tiny villages- Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. We have just learnt that whilst the disciples were away on their preaching tour, He had gone to preach in their home villages (11:1). Perhaps some time had elapsed between verses 19 and 20. He had had little response. Philip, Andrew and Peter were all from Bethsaida, the 'home of fishermen' (Jn. 1:44; 12:21). We sense that the Lord had a specific plan in mind for His preaching work. He made a

particular focus upon Galilee and the home villages of His disciples- and Galilee was of course His own home area. We see in this policy a desire by Him for us to witness in our own immediate environment and family situations. Mk. 8:22-26 records the only miracle the Gospels record as performed in Bethsaida, and the Lord told the cured blind man not to tell anyone in Bethsaida about the miracle- presumably because the people there had already seen ample miracles and had not repented.

Mighty works... repented not- Here we see the purpose of the healing miracles. They were not simply to alleviate human suffering for the sake of it- they were specifically designed to lead people to repentance. God's goodness is intended to lead to repentance (Rom. 2:4). The doing of Christian 'good works' can't be criticized in itself, but it needs to be observed that they often seem to be performed 'for the sake of it', whereas the Lord's works were always within a wider plan and aim of bringing people to spiritual healing.

11:21 *They would have-* God likewise looks down upon our lives today, seeing all possibilities, and how unbelievers would respond so much more to Him than His own dear people. It's the pain of the parent, knowing that other children would respond so much more to their love than their own beloved offspring. The Lord Jesus had something of this when He commented that Tyre and Sidon would've repented had they had His message preached to them; but Israel would not. To know all possible futures must make experiencing human life and poor decision making all the harder and more tragic for the Father and Son.

Repented- Here we see that the intention of the miracles was not merely healing in itself, as a good to humanity- but rather to invite people to repentance. Hence the connection between healing and forgiveness in the account of the healing of the paralyzed man.

Sackcloth- Made of camel and goat hair, therefore very similar to the clothing of John the Baptist- which is the context here (11:8).

11:22 *More tolerable-* Tyre and Sodom were major Gentile cities. The Lord clearly believed their inhabitants would be resurrected and appear at the future day of judgment. Seeing that knowledge is the basis of responsibility to judgment, it follows that there was some witness made to them. Ezekiel's prophecies of condemnation against Tyre can therefore be seen as conditional prophecies, like the prophecy of Nineveh's destruction- they could have repented in response to them. The witness to Sodom was presumably through the witness of Lot's righteous life. The extent of human responsibility to Divine judgment would appear to be far greater than we might suspect. Those who live in the presence of believers are surely responsible to judgment, according to the pattern of Sodom. Clearly there will be degrees of punishment at that day- and for the home villages of the disciples, their suffering will be 'intolerable'. The implication is that if the witness of Ezekiel, Lot etc. had been backed up by the kind of miracles the Lord was performing, then this would've tipped the balance- and they would've repented.

11:23 *Exalted*- Here we have another example of the Bible being written from the perspective of men. Capernaum was exalted in her own eyes, the people there were spiritually proud and exalted in their own eyes. Likewise “the wise” in :25 refers to those who thought they were wise.

Brought down- The prophecy against Babylon of Isaiah 14 is here applied to the towns of Israel. The point is that the condemnation of the wicked Gentiles will come upon those of God’s people who act like them. Likewise the punishment of Babylon was to be cast as a millstone into the sea, but this is applied by the Lord to those of God’s people who make their brethren stumble (Mt. 18:6; Rev. 18:21).

Mighty works- The Greek *dunamis* also has the sense of ability, possible power. The miracles, to which the “mighty works” clearly refer, had potential power to bring the people to repentance, but they were content to just accept the temporal blessings of knowing Jesus rather than being moved by those blessings to repentance.

Had been done- The Lord knew that cities like Tyre and Sidon would have responded to the Gospel in the first century; had it been preached to them. But the message was taken to Jewish villages like Chorazin and Bethsaida instead. Such was God’s love, His especial and exclusive love for Israel. Sodom likewise would have repented if the message of Lot had been backed up by miracles; but, that extra proof wasn’t given. But such a concession was made to Israel through the ministry and miracles of Jesus.

11:24 *Tolerable*- The Greek could suggest ‘endurance’, hinting at a period of suffering rather than an eternal state of suffering. The suffering will be the sense of regret for what could have been, how they could have responded. This sense will be so acute that it is described in figurative terms as Gehenna fire, gnashing of teeth etc. Time and again we must remind ourselves of this, so that day by day we ‘grasp the moment’ and proceed in life with no ultimate cause for spiritual regret.

11:25- see 1 Cor. 1:19. Paul saw the simplicity of the Corinthian believers as the sort of thing Christ referred to in Mt. 11:25.

Answered- Often the Gospels record that Jesus "answered and said...". Yet it's often not clear whether anyone had asked a question, or said anything that needed a response (Mt. 11:25; 22:1; Mk. 10:24, 51; 11:14,22,33; 12:35; 13:2; 14:48; Lk. 5:22; 7:40; 8:50; 13:2; 14:3,5; 17:17; 22:51; Jn. 1:50; 5:19; 6:70; 10:32; 12:23,30; 16:31). If you go through this list, you will see how Jesus 'answered' / responded to peoples' unexpressed fears and questions, their unarticulated concerns, criticisms, feelings and agendas. This little phrase reveals how sensitive Jesus was. He saw people's unspoken, unarticulated needs and responded. He didn't wait to be asked. For Jesus, everybody He met was a question, a personal direct challenge, that He responded to. And of course this is how we should seek to be too. And yet here in Mt. 11:25 He could be responding to His own question and reflection upon why so few responded and why only the immature

disciples seemed to understand anything at all? We see here a window into the very internal thought process of the Lord, something which could only come from a Divinely inspired record.

I thank You Father, Lord of Heaven and earth- This is language taken directly from the *Hodayot*, the Qumran “Thanksgiving Psalms”. There is reason to think that in his years in the Qumran area, John the Baptist became familiar with the Qumran community, and may have passed on some of their style and culture to his converts. The multitudes addressed here by the Lord had initially responded to John (11:7). So it would seem that the Lord is bridge building with them, speaking to them in terms known and accessible to them, and yet leading them further and away from the legalism and extremes of Qumran thought. Note how there is a juxtaposition of God’s Almightyness, as Lord of Heaven and earth, with His closeness to us as “Father”.

The wise- Those who think they are wise in their own eyes- see on “exalted” in :24.

Prudent- Again we see the Lord’s grace, for the disciples themselves weren’t ‘understanding’ (s.w.) of everything at this time (s.w. Mt. 13:51; Mk. 6:52 they considered / understood not; 8:17,21; Lk. 18:34; 24:45). Yet to them was revealed the Truth which others had hid from them.

Revealed- This continues the thought of 11:15, that only some have ears to hear. The word is used in Mt. 16:27 of how the truth of Christ was revealed to Peter, one of the “babes”.

Babes- An essay in the serious immaturity of the disciples, and yet the Lord’s love of them all the same. They are the ‘little ones’ of 10:42, the little children in the town square of 11:16.

11:27 *Are delivered-* Gk. 'were delivered'. The “all things” may be the power of salvation for all men.

Knows- Gk. 'to know fully'. Nobody, the disciples included, to whom the Father had ‘revealed’ repentance, fully knew the Son nor the Father. There is a parallel to be observed here between ‘knowing the Father’ and repenting; for the context speaks of how the majority had not repented despite the Lord’s miracles. The little ones, the babes, the disciples, had repented- but this had been ‘revealed’ to them by the Father (:25). Now, the Lord speaks of how the Son ‘reveals’ the Father. The life of repentance is the life of knowing the Father. To know God is to know our sinfulness and repent. And this is the “rest” from sin which the Lord speaks of in :28.

Save the Son- Whether or not Joseph died or left Mary by the time Jesus hit adolescence, the fact was that Joseph wasn’t His real father. He was effectively fatherless in the earthly sense. As such, this would have set Him up in certain psychological matrices which had their effect on His personality. He could speak of His Heavenly Father in the shockingly unprecedented form of ‘abba’, daddy. He grew so close to His Heavenly Father because of the lack of an earthly one, and the inevitable stresses which there would have been between Him and Joseph. A strong, fatherly-type figure is a recurrent feature of the Lord’s parables; clearly He was very focused

upon His Heavenly Father. He could say with passionate truth: “No one knows a son except a father, and no one knows a father except a son” (Mt. 11:27; Lk. 10:22).

To whomsoever- The idea is not that the Lord Jesus had a list of humanity and chose a few from that list. He has earlier spoken of the freedom of choice to ‘receive’ (:14) God’s message, and He was urging all men to do so. Although all men are potentially delivered to Him, the Father is revealing Himself to only some of them. The Father is revealed in the Son, as John’s Gospel makes clear. It’s not that some people are chosen by the Son to have this revelation; rather is it a statement of fact, or method- the knowledge of the Father is through the Son revealing Him. And this is why He goes straight on in :28 to urge people to come to Him. The ideas of coming to Him and ‘whomsoever’, anyone, are very much the language of John’s Gospel and the Revelation, which concludes with an appeal to ‘whosoever will’ to ‘come’ to Christ and salvation.

11:28 *Come-* See on :27 “whomsoever”. The Lord may be urging the audience to come unto *Him* in the same way as they had come out to hear John preaching (:7-9). The invitation at the last day to “Come” into the Kingdom (Mt. 25:34 s.w.) is heard even now in the invitation to come after Him. The preceding verses share with us a beautiful insight into the mind and inner prayer of the Son to the Father. He meditated upon why apparently so few were responding, and went on to marvel at the Father’s wisdom in revealing only to some, and to the immature ‘little ones’ of His disciples. But arising out of that time of prayer and meditation, the Lord goes on to make a public appeal to whosoever will to come to Him. And this is the exact pattern which our public witness and appeal to others should follow.

Heavy laden- The context is a lament that because people are wise, prudent and exalted in pride, they will not come to the Father and Son. But this way of life and thinking is in fact a hard way to live. Hence the Lord commends His own humility to those proud people. Whilst the arrogance and self-assurance of modern man seems an impossible barrier to the Gospel, we must be aware that actually they are struggling with it and are laden down with it. The word is only elsewhere used about the lawyers lading people with heavy burdens (Lk. 11:46)- not only of guilt, but also of pride in having kept irrelevant laws. David found his sins associated with Bathsheba "as an heavy burden... too heavy for me... I am (thereby) bowed down greatly" (Ps. 32:4,6). Surely our Lord was thinking back to David when he invited all of us: "Come unto me, all you who labour and are heavy laden (with sins), and I will give you rest... for My... burden is light" (Mt. 11:28-30).

Rest- The Lord Jesus invites those who follow Him to accept the “rest” which He gives (Mt. 11:28). He uses a Greek word which is used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, for the Sabbath rest. Jesus was offering a life of Sabbath, of rest from trust in our own works (cp. Heb. 4:3,10). We shouldn’t, therefore, keep a Sabbath one day per week, but rather live our whole lives in the spirit of the Sabbath.

Unto Me- The Pharisees were the ones burdening the people (Mt. 23:4; Lk. 11:46), so this could be read as a fairly direct appeal to quit respecting the religious leaders of the day and follow the teaching of Jesus instead. Legalism and obedience to the Law is likened to an unbearable yoke (Acts 15:10; Gal. 5:1).

11:29 *Take*- The same word is used in the challenge to "take up" the cross. To take up Christ's cross, to take on His yoke, is to learn of Him, to come to know Him. Yet do we sense any *pain* in our coming to know Christ? We should do, because the cross was the ultimate symbol of pain, and to take it up is to take on the yoke, the knowledge, of Christ. Clearly the knowledge of the Father and Son is so much more than knowing theological propositions about them.

Yoke- The yoke metaphor was commonly used at the time to speak of a career or profession / daily occupation. Our 'career' is to be in His service, and any human yoke or career is to not be seen by us as our defining situation in life. We can't be 'career people' in the sense that many are in this world- for our career is with the Lord. And yet the yoke was also understood as 'teaching'; for Sirach 51:26 has the sage inviting students to put their necks under his yoke and learn his teaching. The Lord Jesus is a yoke- He unites men together, so that the otherwise unbearable burden of the spiritual life is lighter (Mt. 11:29). If we do not let our fellowship with others lighten our load, then we basically have not been brought under Christ. To be in Him, under His yoke, is to put our arms around our brethren and labour together. The Lord paralleled "Come unto *Me*" with taking His yoke upon us, in order to have a light burden (Mt. 11:28-30). A yoke is what binds animals together, so that they can between them carry a burden which otherwise would be too great for them individually. The invitation to come unto Jesus personally is therefore an invitation into a community- to be lined up alongside another, and have a yoke placed upon us. Without submitting to this, we can't actually carry the heavy burden laid upon us. This heavy burden laid upon the believer must surely have some reference to the cross we are asked to share in and carry. We can't do this alone; and perhaps it happened that the Lord Himself couldn't even bear His own cross without the help of another, in order to show us the point. We can't claim to have come personally unto Jesus, somehow liking the idea of the Man Jesus, intellectually accepting His teachings on an abstract level- and yet keep our distance from our brethren. It seems increasingly true that human relationships are almost impossible to maintain at an intimate level- without Christ. He is the yoke which enables the psychological miracle of people pulling together, for life, in order to carry His cross. The most essential "law of Christ" is to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). Paul had this in mind when he described his brethren as 'yokefellows' (Phil. 4:3). For Paul, his joy and crown would be to see his brethren accepted into God's Kingdom at judgment day. David had the same spirit when he wrote of how he longed to "see the prosperity of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance" (Ps. 106:5). His personal vision of God's Kingdom involved seeing others there; there's no hint of spiritual selfishness in David. And he goes straight on to comment: "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity... our fathers understood not..." (Ps. 106:6). David felt himself very much at one with the

community of God's children, both in their failures and in their ultimate hope. Life with God simply can't be lived in isolation from the rest of His people. Our salvation in that sense has a collective aspect to it, and if we want 'out' with the community of believers in this life, then we're really voting ourselves out of their future glory.

The reference to having a heavy yoke lifted recalls the servant song which spoke of the need to “undo the bands of the [heavy] yoke” (Is. 58:6). Paul takes passages from Isaiah’s servant songs and applies them to us. The servant who suffered and witnessed to the world was evidently the Lord Jesus. And yet Isaiah is also explicit that the servant is the whole seed of Abraham, “Jacob”, the slowly-developing people of God (Is. 41:8; 44:1). There are many connections within Isaiah between the servant songs, and the descriptions of the people of Israel into which the songs are interspersed. The Saviour-servant was to bring out the prisoners from the dungeons (Is. 42:7), so was every Israelite “to let the oppressed go free... loose the bonds”, and to “undo the bands of the [heavy] yoke” (Is. 58:6) as Christ does here (Mt. 11:28,29); His work of deliverance is to be replicated by each of us in our witness. Whoever is in Him will by this very fact follow Him in this work. In Isaiah’s first context, the suffering servant was King Hezekiah. Yet all Israel were to see themselves as ‘in’ him, as spiritual Israel are to see themselves as in Christ. “He was oppressed”, as Israel at that time were being “oppressed” by Assyria. As they were covered in wounds and spiritual sickness (Is. 1:5,6), so the suffering servant bore their diseases and rose again in salvation victory. Significantly, Isaiah 40-53 speak of the one servant, whereas Isaiah 54-66 speak of the “servants” who fulfil in principle the work of the singular servant. When the Lord speaks of a change of yokes for the weary and a granting of rest in Him (Mt. 11:28-30), He is using terms taken from Isaiah’s restoration prophecies. The offer of rest was rejected by the exiles then; but is taken up now by all who accept Christ, realizing that they are in the same state as the exiles in Babylon.

Lowly- Vine comments: "The word for the Christian virtue of humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη), was not used before the Christian era, and is distinctly an outgrowth of the Gospel". To be able to say in genuine humility that one knows the state of their own heart, and that it is humble, is an essay not only in humility but in the acute self-knowledge of the Lord. The Greek translated “lowly” definitely means cast down, depressed, implying a bringing down from a superior position (s.w. 2 Cor. 7:6). This helps us understand the language of Phil. 2:5-11, which speaks of the progressive humiliation of Christ, culminating in the death of the cross. Even at this point in His ministry, the Lord felt that He had been brought down in mind- He felt the progressive nature of His humility. And in that passage, the appeal is to allow that kind of mind and process to be in us, which was in Christ.

Find- The yoke is *given* but we still have to *find* it by accepting the potential enabled by the Lord.

Rest- He assures us that if we come to Him, we will find “rest” (Mt. 11:29); but the same word is only used elsewhere about the rest / comfort which our brethren give us (1 Cor. 16:18; 2 Cor. 7:13; Philemon 7,20).

11:30- see Ex. 2:11.

Easy- A poor translation. The cross of Christ is anything but "easy"; the idea is more that it is helpful for service; the relationships He enables between believers is what makes it easier for us to carry the heavy loads of His service, i.e. the cross. Even if we still insist on the translation “easy”, we reflect that the way to the Kingdom is easy relative to the wonder of what is in store for the faithful (2 Cor. 4:17); and yet from our human perspective it is hard indeed, a life of self-crucifixion (Acts 14:22; Rev.7:14). “Easy” translates *chrestos*, which sounds very like the ‘Christ’. By this word play the point is being made that Christ *is* His yoke. One of the most essential things about Christ is that those in Him are bound together with each other. Any view of ‘Christ’ which excludes those in Him is therefore fundamentally flawed. Paul therefore teaches avoidance of any who cause division contrary to the teaching of Christ which we have “learned”- using the same word used here about Christ’s uniting yoke being ‘learning’ of Him (Rom. 16:17). See on 20:16.

Light- Mic. 2:3 reminded Israel that they will be under the yoke of judgment if they reject Yahweh’s yoke. The Lord spoke of His servants having a light yoke. The Bible minded among His hearers would have thought back to the threatened punishment of an iron yoke for the disobedient (Dt. 28:48). 'It's a yoke either way', they would have concluded. But the Lord's yoke *even in this life* is light, and has promise of the life which is to come! The logic of taking it, with the restrictions it inevitably implies (for it is a yoke), is simply overpowering. Note that the Greek for ‘light’ essentially means ‘able to be carried’- which connects with the idea of ‘taking up’ the yoke and cross (see on 11:29). The point is- it is doable. The cross can be carried, the yoke can be worn- if we learn of Christ and thereby learn to take our place with others in carrying it.