

Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide  
Matthew 11:28-30

History, Culture, & Context

In this section of Matthew, Jesus finished instructing the twelve disciples and was teaching and preaching in the towns of Galilee. In this final portion of His teaching, Jesus appeals to the crowds with an invitation to all who hurt or are in need.

In verse 28, Jesus assures the crowd to come to Him “...all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Verse 29 continues, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” A yoke is a frame made of wood placed upon an animal’s neck, in order to make them pull a cart or plow. Throughout Scripture, the word yoke has several meanings: (1) is used to refer to slavery and hardship (ex. Gal 5:1; 1 Tim 6:1; Acts 15:10); (2) used to positive ways (ex. Matt 11:29-30); and (3) used to describe the nature of the work of the Church (ex. Phil 4:3-KJV).



The NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible explains, “Only the poorest people would use a yoke to pull their loads. When used figuratively, a yoke represented slavery or submission; Jewish teachers spoke of bearing the yoke of God’s kingdom, through the yoke of the law. Only God would call the yoke of the Kingdom or of the law “My yoke”. Jesus frees people from the oppressive burdens of life. We are offered “rest” through love and peace with God.

Verse 30 concludes, “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Questions to Consider

1. While we are not promised a life of ease and comfort, we are promised a yoke that will bring us rest and comfort. How is Jesus’ “yoke” easy?
2. What are some areas of your life that you find hard and weary? How can you find comfort from what Christ teaches us?
3. Read 1 John 5:1-4. How do these verses help us to understand this section of Matthew?
4. How have you experienced the rest that Christ has promised to us? How can we help others experience this?