

Rest in Christ

“ ‘Come to Me . . . ’ ”

Lesson #5 for July 31, 2021

Scriptures: Matthew 5:5; 11:20-30; Deuteronomy 18:15; Galatians 5:1; 6:2; Exodus 18:13-22.

1. What is Jesus asking us to do when He calls us to “come” to Him? What does it mean to *take His yoke upon us*? What burdens are we to give to Christ? What burdens are we to get from Him? What kind of rest is He offering us?

Matthew 11:20-28: ²⁰ The people in the towns where Jesus had performed most of his miracles did not turn from their sins, so he reproached those towns. ²¹“How terrible it will be for you, Chorazin! How terrible for you too, Bethsaida! If the miracles which were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, the people there would long ago have put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on themselves, to show that they had turned from their sins! ²²I assure you that on the Judgement Day God will show more mercy to the people of **Tyre and Sidon** than to you! ²³And as for you, Capernaum! Did you want to lift yourself up to heaven? You will be thrown down to hell! If the miracles which were performed in you had been performed in **Sodom**, it would still be in existence today! ²⁴You can be sure that on the Judgement Day God will show more mercy to Sodom than to you!”

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, “Father, Lord of heaven and earth! I thank you because you have shown to the unlearned what you have hidden from the wise and learned. ²⁶Yes, Father, this was how you wanted it to happen.

²⁷ “My Father has given me all things. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ “Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Matthew 11:20–28). New York: American Bible Society.†

Matthew 11 marks a turning point in Matthew’s Gospel. The statements denouncing important Galilean cities are the harshest heard so far in the Gospel. Jesus does not curry favors; He puts the finger where it hurts; He associates with the “wrong” people (*Matt. 9:9-13*); His claim to be able to forgive sins is scandalous in the eyes of the religious leaders (*Matt. 9:1-8*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, July 25. §

2. In order to understand the context for Jesus’s statements in Matthew 11, review Matthew 9:1-13 and Hosea 6:6.

Matthew 9:1-13: ¹ Jesus got into the boat and went back across the lake to his own town, ²where some people brought to him a paralysed man, lying on a bed. When Jesus saw how much faith they had, he said to the paralysed man, “Courage, my son! Your sins are forgiven.”

³ Then some teachers of the Law said to themselves, “This man is speaking blasphemy!”

⁴ Jesus perceived what they were thinking, so he said, “Why are you thinking such evil things? ⁵Is it easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ⁶I will prove to you, then, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralysed man, “Get up, pick up your bed, and go home!”

⁷ The man got up and went home. ⁸When the people saw it, they were afraid, and praised God for giving such authority to people.

⁹ Jesus left that place, and as he walked along, he saw a tax collector, named Matthew, sitting in his office. He said to him, “Follow me.”

Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰ While Jesus was having a meal in Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and other outcasts came and joined Jesus and his disciples at the table.

¹¹Some Pharisees saw this and asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with such people?”

¹² Jesus heard them and answered, “People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. ¹³Go and find out what is meant by the scripture that says: ‘It is kindness that I want, not animal sacrifices.’ [Jesus was quoting Micah 6:6.] [So, why are there all those commands and all that discussion about animal sacrifices in the books of Moses and elsewhere in the Old Testament?] I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

3. **Could it really be true that Sodom and Gomorrah, even Tyre and Sidon, would have turned to God if what was done in Capernaum and Bethsaida had been done in them?**
4. What would Jesus say about us today? Would we be compared to Sodom? Or, Tyre?
5. Let us recognize right up front that we cannot “carry our burdens” alone. We need to recognize our true condition. It is hard for proud beings to admit this. But, God commands us to come. However, it is hard for us to surrender. Jesus is giving us three commands in this lesson: **(1) “Come unto me,” (2) “Take my yoke,” and (3) “Learn of me.”**
6. **Taking on a yoke is a symbol of submission.** But, it also means that we are working in cooperation with God.
7. The Jews were accustomed to farming, using oxen, pulling plows, etc. The yoke was a common metaphor in Judaism for the law. Are we prepared to accept His conditions of salvation?
8. In Matthew 5-7, Jesus’s reinterpretation of the laws from the Old Testament were truly radical, even more so than the Pharisees’ interpretation of them.
9. Paul recognized that to many of the Jews, the keeping of the law had become a burden.
Acts 15:10: [After much debate, Peter said:] “So then, why do you now want to put God to the test by laying a load on the backs of the believers which neither our ancestors nor we ourselves were able to carry?”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}
Matthew 11:30: [Jesus said:] “For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}
10. In our world, people scorn gentleness and meekness. People laugh at humility. On social media, one gets attention by being loud, noisy, weird, and wild, even flamboyant. Guess who loves those ways! These characteristics are directly opposed to God’s ways.

11. Contrast these words from Ellen White and from the Bible.

A knowledge of the truth depends not so much upon strength of intellect as upon pureness of purpose, the simplicity of an earnest, dependent faith. To those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance, angels of God draw near. The Holy Spirit is given to open to them the rich treasures of the truth.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons** 59.3.

Matthew 5:5: [Jesus said:] “Happy are those who are humble; they will receive what God has promised!”—*Good News Bible*.*[‡]

12. When we say that Jesus was meek and gentle, let us not make the mistake of thinking He was a pushover. For example, read about His standing up and accusing the Sanhedrin as recorded in John 8 and Matthew 23. (See John 8:44.) But, Jesus had a very tender heart.
13. In Luke 19:41-44, Jesus was even considerate of those who felt hungry. Think of the times He fed huge crowds from a small lunch. Jesus did not want people to go home hungry.
14. While Moses was the preeminent figure of the Old Testament, he was also humble and meek. Are those the characteristics you would choose for a military leader and conqueror?

Numbers 12:3: (Moses was a humble man, more humble than anyone else on earth.)—*Good News Bible*.* [Humbleness was not valued then or now!][‡]

15. So, what is Jesus doing for us when we take His yoke? Or, are we only serving Him?

Instead, we need a Savior who can stand in our stead, not just as an Intercessor but as our **Substitute**. Intercession is important, but it is only God hanging on the cross as our Sin Bearer, as the One who paid in Himself the penalty for our sin, who can save us from the **legal consequences** that our sins would, justly, bring on us. This is why, however great the example Jesus was for us, it would all be for nothing without the Cross and the Resurrection.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, July 27.[†] [Is it **our legal standing with God** that needs to be corrected?][‡]

16. In what sense was Jesus a *Substitute*?
17. In the broadest sense, Jesus died so that we do not have to. His life and His death demonstrated the answers to all of the major questions and refuted all of the accusations that Satan had made against God. Those issues are made clear to us in His life and death.
18. The great controversy cannot come to an end, and we cannot be saved until all of those issues have been resolved. While there are many ramifications of these ideas, these are the broad answers.
19. With whom is Jesus pleading in heaven?
20. The details of the investigation of our lives in heaven prior to the second coming are fairly clearly spelled out in Zechariah 3:1-5 and Daniel 7:9-10. Notice these main points:

1. **Our accuser in the judgment is Satan**, not God the Father as many assume. (Revelation 12:7-12)

2. **The pre-advent judgment is for the benefit of the onlooking universe.** God already knows who is safe to save and who is not. The names of the saved are already written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 13:8) God conducts that pre-advent judgment for the benefit of the onlooking universe who certainly must have questions about the safety of admitting an enormous

number of former-sinners into the kingdom of heaven.

Revelation 13:8: All people living on earth will worship it, except **those whose names were written before the creation of the world in the book of the living which belongs to the Lamb that was killed.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

3. When Satan accuses us before the onlooking universe, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all on our side, pleading for us. (1 John 2:1; John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7)

4. In the end, truth will prevail. Each individual will agree with God's judgment and accept His verdict because of the overwhelming evidence for that fact.

21. **As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed.** They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, just how far pride and rebellion have carried them in the violation of the law of God. The seductive temptations which they encouraged by indulgence in sin, the blessings perverted, the messengers of God despised, the warnings rejected, the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart—all appear as if written in letters of fire.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*^{*} 666.2.[†] [See GC 662-674.][‡]

22. **The problem with sin is not that it causes us legal trouble; sin is deadly!**

Romans 6:23: For **sin pays its wage—death;** but God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

23. A great deal of evidence could be cited for these points. If one wishes to review much of that evidence, see *Prophets and Kings* 582-592 and *The Great Controversy* 479-491.

24. Even in the final judgment, there is no harshness or vindictiveness on God's part.

25. What did Jesus mean when He said, "My yoke is easy"? The word translated *easy* in Greek can mean good, pleasant, useful, even benevolent.

26. Many parents remember with delight the first steps their children took. Walking with Jesus may not always be easy. We may stumble; we may fall; but, with His help, we can get up and continue walking, getting better at it as we practice.

We can be sure that whatever exactly Paul meant by the "yoke of bondage," he was not referring to obedience to God's law, the Ten Commandments. On the contrary, it's through obedience, by faith, understanding that our salvation is secure, not based on the law but on **Christ's righteousness covering us**, that we can have true rest and freedom.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Wednesday, July 28.[†]

27. What does it mean to you to have Christ's righteousness covering you? Why do we need to be covered? Is Jesus trying to sneak us into heaven without the Father and the onlooking universe really knowing the truth about us? Absolutely not! In Zechariah 3 we see that **the filthy garments representing our old sinful ways are removed before the new robe of Christ's righteousness is placed on us.** That is a gradual, lifelong process.

28. God is not asking us to carry some load that we cannot bear. Think of the story of Moses, trying to deal with all the disputes among the children of Israel.

Exodus 18:13-22:¹³ The next day Moses was settling disputes among the people, and he was kept busy from morning till night.¹⁴ When Jethro saw everything

that Moses had to do, he asked, “What is all this that you are doing for the people? Why are you doing this all alone, with people standing here from morning till night to consult you?”

¹⁵ Moses answered, “I must do this because the people come to me to learn God’s will. ¹⁶When two people have a dispute, they come to me, and I decide which one of them is right, and I tell them God’s commands and laws.”

¹⁷ Then Jethro said, “You are not doing it the right way. ¹⁸You will wear yourself out and these people as well. **This is too much for you to do alone.**

¹⁹Now let me give you some good advice, and God will be with you. It is right for you to represent the people before God and bring their disputes to him.

²⁰You should teach them God’s commands and explain to them how they should live and what they should do. ²¹But in addition, you should choose some capable men and appoint them as leaders of the people: leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. They must be God-fearing men who can be trusted and who cannot be bribed. ²²Let them serve as judges for the people on a permanent basis. They can bring all the difficult cases to you, but they themselves can decide all the smaller disputes. That will make it easier for you, as they share your burden. ²³If you do this, as God commands, you will not wear yourself out, and all these people can go home with their disputes settled.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

29. **The church is supposed to be a hospital for sinners.** Is it a psychiatric hospital? But, each of us as we are being healed needs to reach out to others around us and help them as far as possible in their healing. The church is one body. By helping others, we help ourselves.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26: ¹² Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. ¹³In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink.

¹⁴ For the body itself is not made up of only one part, but of many parts. ¹⁵If the foot were to say, “Because I am not a hand, I don’t belong to the body,” that would not keep it from being a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear were to say, “Because I am not an eye, I don’t belong to the body,” that would not keep it from being a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were just an eye, how could it hear? And if it were only an ear, how could it smell? ¹⁸As it is, however, God put every different part in the body just as he wanted it to be. ¹⁹There would not be a body if it were all only one part! ²⁰As it is, there are many parts but one body.

²¹ So then, the eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” Nor can the head say to the feet, “Well, I don’t need you!” ²²On the contrary, we cannot do without the parts of the body that seem to be weaker; ²³and those parts that we think aren’t worth very much are the ones which we treat with greater care; while the parts of the body which don’t look very nice are treated with special modesty, ²⁴which the more beautiful parts do not need. God himself has put the body together in such a way as to give greater honour to those parts that need it. ²⁵And so there is no division in the body, but all its different parts have the same concern for one another. ²⁶If one part of the body

suffers, all the other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness.—*Good News Bible*.*

30. How does “bearing one another’s burdens” help us fulfill the law of Christ?

Galatians 6:1-2: ¹ My brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in any kind of wrongdoing, those of you who are spiritual should set him right; but you must **do it in a gentle way**. And keep an eye on yourselves, so that you will not be tempted, too. ² Help to carry one another’s burdens, and in this way you will obey the law of Christ.—*Good News Bible*.*† [Why does God ask that?][‡]

31. Do you feel that walking the Christian walk is a heavy burden?

When you find your work hard, when you complain of difficulties and trials, when you say that you have no strength to withstand temptation, that you cannot overcome impatience, and that the Christian life is up-hill work, be sure that you are not bearing the yoke of Christ; **you are bearing the yoke of another master**.—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,* July 22, 1889, par. 5.† Compare *Child Guidance* 267.3.

There is need of constant watchfulness and of earnest, loving devotion, but these will come naturally when the soul is kept by the power of God through faith. We can do nothing, absolutely nothing, to commend ourselves to divine favor. We must not trust at all to ourselves or to our good works; but when as erring, sinful beings we come to Christ, we may find rest in His love. **God will accept every one that comes to Him trusting wholly in the merits of a crucified Saviour. Love springs up in the heart.** There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there is an abiding, peaceful trust. Every burden is light; for the yoke which Christ imposes is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure. The path that before seemed shrouded in darkness becomes bright with beams from the Sun of Righteousness. This is walking in the light as Christ is in the light.—Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works** 38.4-39.0.† [These sermons of Ellen White were recorded in shorthand and later transcribed into written form for us to read!][‡]

32. What is the relationship between Christ’s death on the cross and being “meek and lowly”?

Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was **counted** a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. **The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation.** All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father’s mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. **But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father’s reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.**

Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. **The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the**

Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages 753.1-2.†**

33. **The physical pain that Jesus was experiencing must have been incredible. But, in the mind of Jesus who had lived His entire life in very close communion with His Father, the loss of the sense of intimate communion with His Father was so terrible that His physical pain “was hardly felt.” And what is it that separates us from God?**

Isaiah 59:2: It is because of your sins that he doesn't hear you. **It is your sins that separate you from God** when you try to worship him.—*Good News Bible*.*†

34. **The term *God's wrath* refers to God simply turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus, leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequences of their own rebellious choices.**

35. Consider the awful pain and mental anguish that Jesus went through because of His apparent separation from His Father while dying on the cross. Satan was doing everything he could do to convince Jesus that if He went through with this demonstration, He would be eternally separated from His Father. Jesus was demonstrating the full and complete consequences of sin. **“Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race.”** (DA* 753.2 as quoted above in item #32.) **That is why we say that Jesus died the second death. That is the death that sinners will die, eternally separating themselves from the only Source of life, God Himself.**

36. What kind of mental anguish do we feel when we choose to sin, temporarily separating ourselves from God? Do we even think of the pain that that separation caused Christ?

37. In this lesson we have seen three commands from Jesus: (1) “Come to me.” (2) “Take my yoke.” (3) “Learn from me.” Let us consider each command of Jesus again in more depth.

38. The first command: **“Come to me [Jesus].”** (Matthew 11:28, GNB*)†‡

“Come unto Me,” is His invitation. Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 329.1.

39. The second command: **“Take my [Jesus's] yoke.”** (Matthew 11:29, GNB*)†‡ These words may seem strange to us; but, what did they mean to Jesus's original hearers?

Jesus invites us to take his yoke upon our shoulders. The Jews used the phrase *the yoke* for *entering into submission to*. They spoke of the yoke of the Law, the yoke of the commandments, the yoke of the Kingdom, the yoke of God. But it may well be that Jesus took the words of his invitation from something much nearer home than that.

He says, “My yoke is easy.” The word *easy* is in Greek *chrēstos*, which can mean *well-fitting*. In Palestine ox-yokes were made of wood; the ox was brought, and the measurements were taken. The yoke was then roughed out,

and the ox was brought back to have the yoke tried on. The yoke was carefully adjusted, so that it would fit well, and not gall the neck of the patient beast. **The yoke was tailor-made to fit the ox.**

There is a legend that Jesus made the best ox-yokes in all Galilee, and that from all over the country men came to him to buy the best yokes that skill could make.—Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1976). *The Gospel of Matthew** (vol. 2, p. 17). Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster John Knox Press.^{†§}

40. Did Jesus ever make yokes for oxen during His days as a carpenter in Nazareth? We do not know. Would it have been correct to have had a sign over His door, saying: “The best yokes in all of Galilee made here”?

41. The yoke which Christ asked us to bear is made to fit us. He is not asking us to bear a burden that is too much. God will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able.

1 Corinthians 10:13: Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and **he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm**; at the time you are put to the test, **he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out.**—*Good News Bible.*^{*†}

42. The third command: **“Learn from me [Jesus].”** (Matthew 11:29, *GNB**)^{†‡}

There was an unbroken oneness between Jesus and His Father. Never once in His earthly life did Jesus decide to act or think contrary to the Father’s will. Even in the most difficult time of His life, Jesus surrendered His own will to the Father’s will. In Gethsemane, when the fate of the world trembled in the balance and Satan wrung the heart of Jesus with his fiercest temptations, Jesus prayed, “ ‘Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will’ ” (*Matt. 26:39, NKJV*). Perfect peace comes when our hearts and minds are one with Christ’s mind. When, as the old song says, there is “nothing between my soul and the Savior,” we are at peace. Sin disturbs our peace. A broken relationship between us and Jesus upsets our peace. When we come to Him desiring to do His will, yoked with Him in service, He promises, “ ‘You will find rest for your souls’ ” (*Matt. 11:29, NKJV*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 68.[§]

John 17:21: [Jesus prayed:] “I pray that they may all be one. Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me.”—*Good News Bible.*^{*‡}

43. Is there anything that might separate you from living a life of faith in full surrender to Jesus? What would that be? Is there any reason why we should not give up our sins? **Jesus calls us to come to Him just as we are.**

44. In this lesson we have reviewed the call of Jesus to join Him and become His disciples. We have talked about some of the things that implies. We have reviewed some of the details about His death on the cross. Hopefully, we have learned how we can grow to be more like Him. Are we ready to take on that challenge?

© 2021, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. *Electronic version. †Bold type is added. ‡Text in brackets is added. §Italic type is in the source. Info@theox.org

Last Modified: June 6, 2021

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSTG-Hart\Resting in Christ\SS-5-Rest in Christ-2021_07_31-Fin+.wpd