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MATTHEW

Chapter 11:1-11
JESUS DEFENDS JOHN

I. INTRODUCTION

A. In our last study of **Matthew**, we finished **Chapter 10** with the Lord telling the disciples that He did not come to bring peace on the earth, but a “sword” and that sometimes a Christian’s greatest “enemies” will be those in their own household.

1. And it is most likely that the first verse in the next chapter belongs more to **Chapter 10** than it does to **Chapter 11**.

- a) As many of you know our bible was not written in chapter and verse. The majority of it was written a letters, and a letter does not often contain – chapter and verse. (At least I do not include them in my letters)
- b) Chapter and verse were added later to make things easier to read and find.

II. MATTHEW 11:1 (NKJV) — 1 NOW IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN JESUS FINISHED COMMANDING (INSTRUCTING) HIS TWELVE DISCIPLES, THAT HE DEPARTED FROM THERE TO TEACH AND TO PREACH IN THEIR CITIES.

A. I think I would have to agree, this verse seems to conclude the previous chapter of the Lord’s instructions for the Apostles, rather than opening this chapter.

III. MAT 11:2-3 (NKJV) — 2 AND WHEN JOHN HAD HEARD IN PRISON ABOUT THE WORKS OF CHRIST, HE SENT TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES 3 AND SAID TO HIM, “ARE YOU THE COMING ONE, OR DO WE LOOK FOR ANOTHER?”

A. John is in prison for speaking the truth. You see some people just can’t handle the truth, especially if the truth exposes their sin!

1. Let me read the account of what took place so you can better understand why John was in prison.

- a) **Matthew 14:3–11 (NKJV) — 3** For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put *him* in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. **4** Because John had said to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” **5** And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. **6** But when Herod’s birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. **7** Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. **8** So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, “Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter.” **9** And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded *it* to be given to *her*. **10** So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. **11** And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought *it* to her mother.

(1) According to Josephus, this “arrangement” of Herod Antipas with

Herodias took place while he was on a journey to Rome. He stopped at his brother's; fell in love with his brother's wife; agreed to put away his own wife, and Herodias agreed to leave her husband and live with him. They were living, therefore, in adultery; and John, in faithfulness, though at the risk of his life, had reproved them for their crimes. Herod was guilty of two crimes in this act: (Barnes Notes – E-Sword)

(a) Of “adultery,” since she was the wife of another man.

(b) Of “incest,” since she was a near relative, and such marriages were expressly forbidden, [Lev 18:16](#).

(i) So, John between his arrest and his be-heading – is asking Jesus this question, **"Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"**

2. This is the same John that baptized Jesus in the Jordan: **Matthew 3:13–17 (NKJV) — 13** Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. **14** And John *tried to prevent Him*, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” **15** But Jesus answered and said to him, **“Permit *it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*”** Then he allowed Him. **16** When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. **17** And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, **“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”**

a) Perhaps John, who was so sure at the baptism, is beginning to have doubts as he sits in jail with his life in jeopardy!

(1) Or perhaps and more likely – it was those around him – his followers that were beginning to wonder why the Lord would let John sit in jail or even die – if John was there unjustly for doing the Lord's work!

(a) This is the kind of thing people question their faith over!

(i) It is the classic, “Why do bad things happen to good people?”

(a) John ended up giving his life for the cause of Christ – so it is very likely that John asked this question for those around him – even more than for himself!

IV. MATTHEW 11:4–6 (NKJV) — 4 JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID TO THEM, “GO AND TELL JOHN THE THINGS WHICH YOU HEAR AND SEE: 5 THE BLIND SEE AND THE LAME WALK; THE LEPERS ARE CLEANSSED AND THE DEAF HEAR; THE DEAD ARE RAISED UP AND THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. 6 AND BLESSED IS HE WHO IS NOT OFFENDED BECAUSE OF ME.”

A. Basically Jesus is saying, “Judge it for your selves, can anyone but God do these things?”

1. Then Jesus begins to preach to the crowd about John to remind them of what an incredible man he was!

a) I find it interesting that when Jesus was just beginning His ministry – John validated Him through the baptism.

- b) Now – there are no doubt many who are beginning to question John’s ministry because of his being in Jail – so Jesus defends him.
 - (1) May it be this way with us as Christians. When we find a brother or sister “down” or his/her integrity is in question – may we be the first to defend instead of tear down!

V. **MATTHEW 11:7 (NKJV) — 7 AS THEY DEPARTED, JESUS BEGAN TO SAY TO THE MULTITUDES CONCERNING JOHN: “WHAT DID YOU GO OUT INTO THE WILDERNESS TO SEE? A REED SHAKEN BY THE WIND?”**

A. In other words - Remember who John is! When you went into the wilderness to see him and hear what he had to say = did you see a wimpy, fragile, weak guy – shaken by every wind that blew by.

1. You saw a strong – courageous man of God!

VI. **MATTHEW 11:8 (NKJV) — 8 BUT WHAT DID YOU GO OUT TO SEE? A MAN CLOTHED IN SOFT GARMENTS? INDEED, THOSE WHO WEAR SOFT CLOTHING ARE IN KINGS’ HOUSES.**

A. Same thought here! John was not a wimpy guy dressed in fine clothing in the king’s palace. He was a “strong locusts and wild honey eatin’, camelhair kind-a-guy” in THE King’s wilderness!

VII. **MATTHEW 11:9–11 (NKJV) — 9 BUT WHAT DID YOU GO OUT TO SEE? A PROPHET? YES, I SAY TO YOU, AND MORE THAN A PROPHET. 10 FOR THIS IS HE OF WHOM IT IS WRITTEN: ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’ 11 “ASSUREDLY, I SAY TO YOU, AMONG THOSE BORN OF WOMEN THERE HAS NOT RISEN ONE GREATER THAN JOHN THE BAPTIST; BUT HE WHO IS LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS GREATER THAN HE.**

A. “You went out to the wilderness to see a man of God doing the will of God – THAT is the kind of man John the Baptist is! These was one greater than John at the time!

1. This phrase, **But the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he**, does not mean that any believer is greater than John.
 - a) But what it does mean is that the prophets spoke of what was to come!
 - b) John spoke of what was currently going on amongst them.
 - c) But the newest baby Christian can speak of what was and is and is to come!
 - (1) In other words, as John Wesley put it, he *“has a more perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ, of his redemption and kingdom, than John the Baptist had, who died before the full manifestation of the Gospel.”*
 - (2) We have God’s word and the fullness of that revelation!

VIII. **CONCLUSION**

A. It helps a great deal in our understanding this section of scripture – if we remember that the mindset of the time was that God rewarded those who were good and punished those who were evil.

1. The problem is that we do not “see” nor look at things the way the Lord does.
 - a) **Isaiah 55:8–9 (NKJV) — 8** “For My thoughts *are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,*” says the LORD. **9** “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.
 - b) There would be those who would doubt John’s ministry because he was in jail and would eventually die.
 - c) There would be those who would doubt Jesus’ ministry and even His love for John – because He did not “storm the gates” to get John out of prison or to save his life.
 - (1) Jesus is trying to explain that it was for this reason – John had come!
 - (a) **Malachi 3:1 (NKJV) — 1** “Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts.
 - (b) **Malachi 4:5 (NKJV) — 5** Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.
 - (i) **Matthew 11:14 (NKJV) — 14** And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who is to come.