



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

MATTHEW 11:1-15

JESUS CORRECTS AND COMMENDS JOHN—

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INTRODUCTION:

Chapter 10:37-42 Jesus had just spoken to and commanded the disciples to love not father or mother; son or daughter more than Him, for they wouldn't be worthy of Him. And if they didn't take up their cross and follow after Him, they wouldn't be worthy of Him. If their life is all about themselves, they would lose their lives, The disciple must put Jesus first (10:37-39). Jesus continues: Whoever receives the disciples, receives Jesus, and whoever receives Jesus, receives the One (the Father) who sent Him. Whoever receives a prophet, or a righteous man would receive a prophet's reward or a righteous man's reward. And whoever shares a cup of cold water to drink with one of the least of Jesus' disciples is like sharing it with Jesus in the name of a disciple, and the one who's sharing shall not lose their reward because of the care shown to His messenger.

LESSON: I. CORRECTING JOHN'S EXPECTATIONS MATTHEWS 11:1-6

11:1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. So, when Jesus ended the commands (His instructions) to the twelve disciples, He went to preach and teach in their cities (the cities of the disciples, which were the cities of Galilee). It looks like Jesus began to minister alone or if they were with Him, they were to learn through practical experiences.

11:2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,— As Christ is ministering, He is approached by two disciples of John the Baptist. The disciples of John were poking around the crowds and hanging around the edges, watching what Jesus was doing, because it was utterly important to John since he was the one who announced the Messiah had come. John was in prison, and he heard about the works of Christ. This indicated that although he was a prisoner, his disciples had some kind of access to get news to him. This means they stayed close to him and John sends them to ask Jesus a question.

•John's Disciples' Question Are You The One?

11:3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?— John's two disciples came to Jesus on behalf of John who's suffering in prison, probably going stir-crazy (restless), for he wanted to be sure of one thing before he died, that the one whom he had announced to be the Messiah was indeed the Messiah, for he had gotten Word of all that Jesus was doing. The disciples ask, "*Are You the One, the True Messiah, or do we look for another?*" Why did John, who previously recognized Jesus as Messiah in John 1:29-36, ask this question? The question implies that he believed but was having some perplexity. It's as if he's saying, "*I believe that You're the Messiah; am I wrong in believing that?*"

I'm in A • **DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES**— John's questioning began when he was in prison facing great trouble and trial. It is sometimes difficult to understand why we have to go through so much trouble.

There's This • **INCOMPLETE REVELATION**—He was getting things secondhand instead of having a firsthand look. Even the strongest are not always strong, no matter who they are. Even "*preparers*" want to be assured from time to time. They're not made of stone, but of flesh and blood, and need God's mercy and grace!

He had • **UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS**— John did not fully understand everything even though some of the things





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he predicted from his own mouth were from God. He had done exactly what God told him. Jesus was on a mission of mercy, and John thought it was of judgment against the Romans. *"There comes one after me that is mightier than I, who comes with unquenchable fire, with a winnowing fan in His hand, by which He will separate the wheat from the chaff,"* which is judgment. What he heard and what he expected are two different things. However, I believe deep down within, he trusted Jesus anyway.

• Jesus' answer to John's Disciples

11:4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

John had just questioned if Jesus was the true Messiah and Jesus answered John's disciples by telling them, *"Go back to John again and tell him about the miracles you've seen me do..."* Jesus is correcting; making adjustments to John's expectations.

Our doubts come when we convince ourselves how it's supposed to be done, but it's done another way; something goes wrong, and we have questions.

We lose a child to death or unbelief, or lose a husband or wife, or mother or father, or a dear friend, or someone gets cancer or has a heart attack, or a child is struck by a car and crippled for life, and we begin to say, *"God, is this what it's supposed to be like when You care and love us?"* If everything doesn't go the way we think it should go, we wonder if God loves us, and we fall easily into doubt.

So, there is John sitting in prison. John is hearing about the works of Jesus and sends two of his disciples to Jesus. Jesus' answer: *"... Go and tell John the things which you've heard and seen. Give him the revelation, give him the manifestation; tell him what I've done."* Jesus spoke as the Messiah, as One having authority. His words and the power of His Words; His Message were evidence enough.

11:5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Jesus' assurance comes in six examples:

1. Jesus demonstrated the power and works of the Messiah. He did not just profess, He proved it.
 1. He gave sight to the blind.
 2. He opened the ears of the deaf.
 3. He made the lame to walk.
 4. He raised the dead.
 5. He cleansed the lepers.
 6. He preached the gospel to the poor.
2. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Messiah.
3. Jesus promised both the blessing and judgment of the Messiah.

He was reaching out in the power of the Spirit to individuals, saving and restoring them, not reaching out to mobilize people for the deliverance of Israel from Roman enslavement. That makes me think—

"We will never be free from racial enslavement here on this earth because this is not our world, not our home. We have another home. Jesus is reaching out in the power of the Spirit to individuals, saving and restoring them. So, Jesus is steadily getting us ready to be ready for the new home. This should have corrected any misunderstandings or any other expectations or doubts in us, as well as John."

11:6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. Then Jesus gives a closing Beatitude in verse 6. *"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."* What does He mean by that? Well, it's a gentle rebuke, a gentle warning. *"If you want to be blessed,"* He says, *"Then don't stumble over Me. Don't doubt!"*

The word "offended" is skandalizo; it means "a trap." *"Blessed is the man who is not trapped."* A trap was a crooked stick, and the bait was on the crooked stick, and when the animal grabbed the bait, the crooked stick fell, and the trap got him and he was dead. It became a word that meant "offended."

So, the Lord is saying, "If you want to be blessed, don't allow anything I do or anything I say to lure you into



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the trap of doubt and make you stumble." It was alright to ask! It was alright to question, but don't doubt. Don't fall into that trap. Don't doubt, because if you doubt, you won't be blessed.

With this kind of Beatitude: "*Blessed is the man who doesn't doubt, but trusts*", Jesus is saying that the Messianic blessing and judgment were coming; judgment of blessing or judgment of being offended when He returns. That will be the day of fire and judgment. So, Jesus sends that little rebuke in verse 6 and says, "*John, if you want to be blessed, don't doubt. Don't let anything lure you into the trap of doubt, not even difficult circumstances, incomplete revelation, or unfulfilled expectations. I do care; can't you see that by the people I've touched? Someday, you'll be delivered, while not in this world, but in the next.*"

II. CORRECTING THE CROWD'S EXPECTATIONS MATTHEW 11:7-15

11:7 **And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?**— When John's disciples had gone. Jesus began talking about him to the crowd. Undoubtedly the crowd heard these words Jesus spoke to these two disciples of John. And the crowd (the multitude) became concerned of what John asked. Now, Jesus has to correct the crowd's expectations of John. ¹Earlier, Jerusalem was going all out to see John, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. Now, Jesus asks those same crowds, "*What did you go out to see in the wilderness when you went to see John?*" so, Jesus says "*a reed shaken in the wind?*" Jesus mocks them with this phrase. John wasn't shaken like a reed in the wind. He didn't sway with every breeze of change or trial or opposition or crowd. He stood firm in his own calling.

11:8 **But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.** Again, Jesus asks the same crowd, "*What did you go out to see when you went to see John?*" So, Jesus says "*a man clothed in soft raiment? those wearing soft clothing were in king's houses.*" According to Matthew 3:4 (BSV) "*John wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.*" He was a man of discipline and self-denying. He was not crumbling under the weight of opposition as a soft and materialistic minded person would be.

Jesus Comments On John

11:9 **But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.** Again, Jesus asks the same crowd, "*What did you go out to see when you went to see John? You went to see a prophet? Yes, but John is more than a prophet which meant that he was the subject of prophecy as well as the messenger of it. A "prophet" is a foreteller, a proclaimer of God's message. The message may deal with the past, present, or future. He was spoken of in Malachi 3:1 as well as the Savior.*

11:10 **For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.** Jesus repeated the Word of the prophet Malachi. John was already written about in the Old Testament. "*Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee*" (Malachi 3:1a). John is the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. God chose a person to run ahead and herald the coming of the Messiah. He did not choose a King or any other person of power or fame. He called a man even in Jesus' own family that was filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb whose mother conceived him in her old age to preach the coming of the Messiah. When going back to verse 9 when Jesus says that John was more than a prophet, we can say that (1) it was a privilege that John a man was sent by God. (2) It was a privilege for Jesus' cousin to prepare the way for Him and to proclaim the truth, and he proclaimed it no matter the cost. (3) And it was such a great privilege for John to baptize Jesus, his cousin.

¹<http://www.rondaniel.com/library/40-Matthew/Matthew1102.htm>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

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11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. Jesus really builds John up to a plateau they had not expected. He goes from the human, physical sense of his birth "*Among those born of a women...there is none greater*" and then to the Spiritual sense "*...he is least in the kingdom of heaven.*" Jesus tells them that John was the greatest on one hand, and yet, the least on the other hand. Why? Whenever Jesus mentions someone by name in Scripture, He wants us to remember them. Two things stand out about John:

1. His dedication and commitment to God.
2. His preaching of repentance for the coming of the Messiah.

John was the last prophet under the Old Testament Covenant. However, no Old Testament prophet ever had the privilege that John had. They prophesized that Jesus was coming, but (4) John saw Him come. They anticipated His coming, but John saw Him come which fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy. However, neither Old Testament prophet had privilege like the believers have today of knowing the purpose of the cross and the Resurrection. This is not favoritism, but it is a heavier responsibility for which followers of Christ shall be held more accountable for knowing of the cross and the Resurrection of Christ. John did not. He only knew that the Messiah had come.

Remember, even if you're the least person to be saved under the New Covenant, you've got a better deal than the greatest person under the Old Covenant. The humblest believer can know more about God than the greatest of the Old Testament saints! When someone has faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, their sins are erased; they are made a child of God, and the Holy Spirit seals them, and dwells inside of them. They are made a temple of God no matter when they come into the kingdom. Jesus also says in Matthew 19:30 "*But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*"

But don't fret, for when you look at 1 Thessalonians 4:16c-17 our reward is "*...and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*" *The dead shall receive their incorruptible bodies first.*"

Suffering Violence

11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. First: What is the kingdom of heaven? "*The kingdom of heaven*" is the spiritual kingdom; territory and everlasting realm ruled by the King and God Himself reigns. Matthew 3:1-2 says, "*In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea...Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" Jesus is saying that the kingdom of heaven suffered (*underwent and experienced*) violence from the time John began to preach until now. The kingdom of heaven has endured violent assault. John was raised up to be the herald of the kingdom of God's Son. He was pushing back the darkness with great force, dealing a heavy blow to Satan's authority while enduring intense physical attack. He told it like it was; until now. What about now? Well Herod had taken John and thrown him into prison. The attack is launched against the kingdom that John preached about. By force, violent men laid hold by force (violent). However, Jesus states: *the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent takes it by force* is something to give thought.

Second: There's the kingdom of this world, which is earthly and there's the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God which are spiritual ruled by the King and God Himself.

- The earthly kingdom is based upon force, pride, the love of human praise, the desire for domination, and self-interest, and fights against the Kingdom of heaven.
- While the spiritual kingdom is based on love, sacrifice, humility, and righteousness. From the days of John until now, the kingdom of heaven (the reign and rule of the King) suffered violence (aggressive harm, violation), and the violent (cruel, vicious) men take it (seize it) by violent force.

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You see the devil and the world will not win, and will not understand that the kingdom of heaven has supreme authority. However, the kingdom of heaven will suffer much violence through attacks from the enemy. This comes to show us that the kingdom will never be received passively.

11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. John the Baptist was the last of a long history of Old Testament prophets that looked forward to the coming of Jesus Christ. John opened the kingdom of heaven to sinners and thus became the culminating point of the Old Testament witness. However, no Old Testament prophet ever had privilege that John had. They prophesied that Jesus was coming, but John saw Him come. They anticipated His coming, but John saw Him come which fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy.

John / Elijah

11:14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. The last promise in the Old Testament from God:

Mal. 4:5-6 *"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."* John was the promised Elijah, the forerunner who was to precede the Messiah, but note he was not Elijah in person, but he was like Elijah in spirit and power.

In Luke, the angel Gabriel foretold that John the Baptist was going to come. Luke 1:17 *"...in the spirit and power of Elijah..."* He was the fulfillment in the spirit and power of Elijah, but not Elijah. To receive the fact that John came in the power and spirit of Elijah, meant that a person also could receive Jesus as the Messiah, the One whom John predicted. However, they ultimately rejected Jesus Christ. John's prophetic role was boldly confronting sin and pointing people to God.

11:15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. God expects us to use the faculties we have in order to receive His message. We have eyes to see His work; ears to hear His message; minds to reason the truth; hands to work His works; feet to go where He wishes. We are to be committed to the Messiah as John was. If ever they were willing to listen, this was the time for them to listen with that spiritual part of themselves.

SUMMARY:

Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, and then went preaching in the cities. John the Baptist was in prison at the time. He heard about all the miracles the Messiah was doing, so he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, to ask "Are you really the one, or do we look for another?" Jesus tells the disciples to go back and tell John about the miracles they've seen Him do— the blind healed, the lame walk, the lepers cured, the deaf hear, the dead raised to life; and the poor hear Him preach the gospel; and 'Blessed are those who are not offended of Him' (11:1-6).

Jesus began to talk to the multitudes about John. "He asked them when they went out into the wilderness what did they expect to see, a reed shaken in the wind or a man dressed soft raiment?, or a prophet of God? Yes, but Jesus adds that he is more than just a prophet. Jesus goes on to tell them that John is the one who they wrote about in Scripture that would be the messenger to prepare the way for Him, to announce His coming, and prepare people to receive Jesus. Jesus goes on to tell them that *"Truly, there is not one risen that is greater of all men born among women than John the Baptist. Yet, the least in the Kingdom of Heaven will be greater than he is! And from the days of John the Baptist began preaching and baptizing until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffered violence and the violent takes it by force, for all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. Jesus says if they were willing to receive this, he is Elijah, the one who was to come. Those who had ears to hear, let him hear!"* (11:7-15).