

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN SUFFERETH VIOLENCE

October 8, 2017

Matthew 11:1-30

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” Matthew 11:12

From prison, John the Baptist had sent his disciples to inquire whether Jesus was truly Messiah. Jesus gave overwhelming evidence to them (v. 5), then spoke to the multitudes regarding John.

First, He commended John’s character, affirming that no greater man had been born (11). Then, He made reference to the success of John’s ministry (v. 12). John preached, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (3:2). Jesus affirmed, “from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”

This verse, which has been challenging for translators, may be better understood when translated thus: “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom is pressing forward vigorously, and vigorous men are eagerly taking possession of it” (Hendrickson). It affirms that since John’s ministry the kingdom of heaven was being forcibly entered, and those entering were seizing it for themselves.

Clearly, entrance into God’s kingdom was not a passive, “go with the flow” by uncommitted people. There was nothing casual about it. Heaven’s kingdom was being entered by souls who passionately sought entrance, who abandoned themselves—body, soul and spirit—to such citizenship. In many other references, Christ affirmed this.

John the Baptist, to whom Christ had just given highest commendation, was imprisoned and soon to be martyred for the kingdom’s sake. When hearing that Christ’s ministry had surpassed his own, he responded, “my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:29, 30).

When Jesus’ disciples rejected the prophecy of His crucifixion, Jesus rebuked their unbelief in, saying, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). He told them, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26).

When a man offered to follow Jesus wherever He went, “Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). Nothing more is known of that man. Evidently, the cost of following Christ was more than he was willing to pay.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my

Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Philippians 3:7, 8).

Matthew 11:2-19
Ministry of John the Baptist & Christ’s Assessment Thereof
Outline

I. John’s Condition and Question (2-6)

- A. John’s Condition (2)
- B. John’s Question (3)
- C. Christ’s Answer to John’s Question (4-6)

II. John’s Person and Character (7-11)

- A. John’s Characteristics (7-9)
- B. Prophecy of John’s Coming (10)
- C. Greatness of John’s Ministry (11a)
- D. Contrast with Citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom (11b)

III. Reactions to John’s Ministry (12-19)

A. Those Who Have Ears to Hear (12-15)

- 1. The Kingdom of Heaven Suffers Violence (12)
- 2. The Prophets/Law Ministered until John’s Coming (13)
- 3. John is the Elijah of Whom Prophets Spoke (14)
- 4. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (15)

B. “This Generation”

- 1. Illustration: Folly and Rejection of John (16-18)
- 2. Rejection of Christ (19)