

MATTHEW 11

REST FOR THE WEARY

At the beginning of this chapter, we find Jesus supporting His messengers that He sent out in the last chapter by making a public appearance Himself. He arranged their missionary tour, and then followed in their footsteps. It was His plan to send them two and two through the cities of Israel, and then to follow them up in person and sustain their testimony by His own instruction – for He came to this earth “to teach and to preach.”

A large portion of this chapter contains Christ’s words of encouragement to His herald, John the Baptizer; as well as His subsequent vindication of John’s ministry before the assembled multitudes. By this time, John was in prison because of his “offensive” words concerning King Herod. Here we find him sending an embassy of his followers to Jesus with a question concerning our Lord’s mission. John knew full well that Jesus was indeed the Son of God; but when he heard of all that Jesus did, he may have wondered why he himself was left in prison. Perhaps he thought that someone else was yet to come before all things could be rectified. When John’s delegates came to Him, Jesus set clear evidence before their eyes. He based the evidence of His Messiah-ship upon the miracles that He did. The messengers received a command to “go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see.” Of hearing and seeing, they had more than they could fully report – and more than enough to make them see for themselves that Jesus was the Christ! Jesus is His own proof. If people wish to hear arguments in favor of the Gospel, then let them hear and see what it is and what it does in the hearts and lives of those who were bound in sin’s prison!

“And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see?” (verse 7) Our Lord will sooner or later bear testimony to the man who has faithfully testified of Him. John honored Jesus; and in due time, Jesus honored John. Our Lord asks His hearers what they thought of the man who had been His own forerunner and herald. They had gone to see John; they even “went out into the wilderness” to have a look at him. What did they see? A fickle orator? A man-pleaser who tickled the ears of royal ladies? No, he had refused to be silent in the presence of royal sin, and so he had been put in prison. “But what went ye out for to see?” asked Jesus. “A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet” (verse 9). John was all that the very greatest of the prophets had been; and he came nearer to Jesus than all the rest, for his Master’s steps were close upon his heels. As the very forerunner of Christ, he was the chief among the prophets. “Among

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The Lord Jesus follows His disciples, and teaches and preaches – verse 1
- ❖ John the Baptizer sends his disciples to Jesus with a question – verses 2-6
- ❖ Jesus talks to the multitudes about John – verses 7-19
- ❖ Jesus speaks words of warning, rejoicing, and invitation – verses 20-30

them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist,” declared Jesus (verse 11). He was the Second Elijah of whom Malachi had prophesied, and for whom the Jews were looking! But our Lord condemns the folly of the age in which He lived. The people would not listen to the messenger of God, whoever he might be; but instead, they raised childish objections. They were like “children sitting in the markets,” who asked their friends to play with them, but they could never agree upon the game. If certain of the children wanted to play at having a wedding, and began to blow joyful music upon the pipes, the others would not dance. And when they proposed imitating a funeral, and began to mourn, the others would not lament. Such was the foolish manner of men in our Lord’s time. John was an ascetic, and the people said that he must be out of his mind and under the influence of a demon. Jesus, on the other hand, was a Man among men, and He went to their feasts; and then they accused Him of eating and drinking to excess, and associating with the sordid and wicked. There was no pleasing these people! And it is the same way today.

“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not” (verse 20). Some cities in the land of Israel were more favored with the Lord’s presence than others; and therefore, He looked for more from them. These cities ought to have repented, or else Christ would not have upbraided them. The punishment that the inhabitants of Sodom will endure when the great Judge of all men appoints the doom of the wicked, we may not try to imagine; but it will be somewhat less than the penalty inflicted upon those who have sinned against the light and rejected the Gospel!

So far, our Lord spoke in heaviness of heart; but surely His brow cleared when He came to the glorious theme in the next verse! “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,” He said, “because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (verse 25). Now He turned to the other side of truth; with rejoicing spirit, He sees how God’s sovereign grace meets the unreasonable aboundings of human sin. He chooses out His own people, according to the good pleasure of the Father’s will.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (verse 28). Here is the gracious invitation of the Gospel, in which the Savior’s tears and smiles were blended – as in a covenant-rainbow of promise! “Come!” says the Lord Jesus. He drives none away, but He calls them to Himself. All laboring men and all heavy-laden women and children may come; He does not limit the call to the spiritually laboring, but every working and wearied one is also called. In Himself – the great sacrifice for sin – the conscience, the heart, and the understanding obtain complete rest.



Thank You, Jesus, for Your gracious invitation which You extend to us, to come to You in all our weariness and sin, so that we may find true rest for our souls! Amen.