

11/28/18

**The Fickle Crowd**  
**Matt. 11:1-15**

Jesus taught with supreme authority His disciples on the Sermon on the Mount that they were to live by the standards of the kingdom as children of God, not like the Pharisees, as religious hypocrites. Matt. 5-7

1. Jesus exposed their legalistic evil heart as they attempted to exalt themselves over the people.
2. Jesus rip off their mask of their pretentious righteousness only to be seen of men.
3. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for the critical spirit over the life of others, being in greater sin themselves.

Then Jesus came down to demonstrate His authority by the miracles as He healed people, deliver the demon possessed and even raise the dead, but not without being opposed and rejected. Matt. 8-9

Jesus commissioned the twelve to preach the gospel to the Jews with clear instructions warning they would be rejected and persecuted, even by family. Matt. 10

Now Jesus reproves the crowds for their wavering unbelief as the disciples of John come to Jesus, which is characterized by three things. Matt. 11:1-15

- I. The question of the disciples of John. vs. 1-6
- II. The exaltation of John. vs. 7-10
- III. The identification of John. vs. 11-15

**I. The question of the disciples of John. vs. 1-6**

**A. The occasion is clearly stated. vs. 1**

1. The time was at the sending out of the apostles, “Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples.” vs. 1a-b
  - a. This looks back to the chapter ten.
  - b. The phrase, “When Jesus finished” appears five times, at the end of each of the five major discourses. Matt. 7:28, 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1
  - c. The twelve were commanded to preach the gospel to the Jews only and sent out.
2. The decision of Jesus is stated, “that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.” vs. 1c
  - a. Jesus having sent the twelve ahead of Him to preach would be coming behind them and catch up to them. Matt. 10:23
  - b. This verse is a transitional, but I think it should be the last verse of chapter ten.

**B. The arrival of the disciples of John. vs. 2-3**

1. The reason they came was to ask Jesus a question for John, “And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples.” vs. 2
  - a. Matthew is the only one who tells us John was already in prison, “Now when

- Jesus heard John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee.” Matt. 4:12
- b. John was imprisoned by Herod Antipas in the fortress of Machaerus, south of Jerusalem on the east side of the Dead Sea, 13 miles southwest of the Horodium. Lk. 7:18-23
  - c. John had rebuked Herod for taking his brother’s wife and divorcing his own wife. Matt. 14:3-4; Lk. 3:19-20
2. The question of John was about the report he had heard regarding the ministry of Jesus, “about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples.” vs. 2a-b
    - a. The works “ergon”, indicate that which Jesus was undertaking or doing.
      - 1) He was preaching the gospel.
      - 2) He was teaching the word of God.
      - 3) He was healing, casting out demons.
    - b. The word Christ “Christos”, means the anointed Messiah.
      - 1) John knew Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah by hearing the voice of the Father at His baptism. Matt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22
      - 2) John affirmed who Jesus was even after His temptation in the wilderness, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!” Jn. 1:29

3. The question to Jesus was very specific, “And said to Him, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?” vs. 3
    - a. The question was asked in front of all the people Jesus was teaching.
      1. In the minds of the people, it would seem that John was not sure about Jesus being the Messiah, indicated by “the Coming One”.
      2. In the minds of the people, it would seem that John was doubting by the words, “or do we look for another.”
        - \* The word another “heteron”, means different person than Jesus.
      3. Some commentators believe John was doubting and attribute it to being in prison, disillusioned and depressed, but this is shere speculation!
    - b. The reason John asked the question was due to the nature of the ministry of Jesus, “the works”. vs. 2a
      - 1) Jesus was preaching, teaching and healing, but it didn’t line up with Jewish mid-set of John or his message of judgment. Matt. 3:10, 12
      - 2) John was waiting for Jesus to bring judgment on the world, get him out of prison and set up the Kingdom Age.
- C. The response of Jesus to the disciples of John. vs. 4-6

1. Jesus told them to simply go and report to John the things they were seeing. vs. 4
  - a. Again, John was expecting a conquering Messiah and was waiting to see Jesus to set up the Kingdom Age.
  - b. The disciples of Jesus were also expecting Him to destroy the power of Rome as He headed to Jerusalem and set up the Kingdom Age. Lk. 19:11
  - c. In fact just before Jesus ascended to heaven His apostles still believed Jesus was going to set up the Kingdom, “Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time **restore** the **kingdom** to Israel?” Acts 1:6
2. Jesus described to them the very things they were observing, “The blind see and *the* lame walk; *the* lepers are cleansed and *the* deaf hear; *the* dead are raised up”. vs. 5

\* This is an allusion to the miracles in the Kingdom Age now present at the arrival of the kingdom of heaven. Is. 35:5-6
3. Jesus quotes Isaiah again giving the key and direct fulfillment of the arrival of the Kingdom of heaven through the Messiah, “the poor have the gospel preached to them”, by quoting Isaiah. Is. 61:1
  - a. Jesus will quote the same passage of Isaiah as a direct fulfillment when he

- reads out of the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth. Lk. 4:16-21
- b. The poor here are the same poor of the Beatitudes. Matt. 5:3
  4. The words of Jesus were to encourage John, not to rebuke him. vs. 6
    - a. This is the first beatitude since the Sermon on the Mount, “And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”
    - b. The word blessed “makarios”, means happy, true lasting happiness that comes from believing, trusting and resting in Jesus to be Savior, faithful and true.
 

\* There will be other beatitudes. Matt. 13:16; 16:17; 24:46
    - c. The word offended “skandalizo”, means a stumbling block causing a person to begin to mistrust and desert one whom he ought to trust and obey.
 

\* Jesus told John, you are unhappy due to the fact that you misunderstand what I am doing, “My ways!”

### Illustration

I am sure that Noah wondered why God would have him take all that time to build an ark, why did God not just kill all the people! But God waited 120 years to demonstrate His loving patience towards sinners.

### Application

1. There are times when we are like John.

- a. Why don't You judge that person Lord?
- b. Why do You let them get away with so much?
- c. Why don't You rapture the church now Lord?  
 \* "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider *that the **longsuffering** of our Lord is salvation-*" 2Pet. 3:113-15

2. Some times people question God about His revealed plan and schedule.

- a. Why would God allow Adam to sin if He knew it was going to result in the corruption of man?
- b. Why would God bind Satan for 1,000 years and then let him lose to deceive man again?
- c. Why did God allow Satan to deceive Eve?
- d. There is an answer for each of these, but the thought behind each of these questions is, "I would have done it different", implying it would have been better than what God chose.  
 \* "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His **counselor**? Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen." Rom. 11:33-36

3. There are times that we as believers do not know why God is doing certain things and we would like to straighten Him out!

- a. Then as time runs, we see the wisdom of God.
- b. We learn to trust God when we do not know what or why He is doing or allowing things.  
 \* "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And **lean not** on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And **lean not** on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones." Prov. 3:5-8

*The question of the disciples of John was due to misunderstanding the Scriptures!*

## II. The exaltation of John. vs. 7-10

- A. The words of Jesus defended John as a man of faith to the unbelieving crowds. vs. 7-9
  - 1. Jesus addressed the crowds about John, "As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John." vs. 7a-b

- a. The disciples of John went their way to give John the answer of Jesus and now He turned to confront and reveal the crowds' heart of unbelief.
  - c. Three rhetorical question were asked by Jesus, each had an obvious correct answer.
2. The first rehtorical question Jesus asked was if John was a fearful weak man easily swaded, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? vs. 7c-d
- a. The word see "theaomai" means attentively.
  - b. There were many reeds on the shore of the Jordan River in the wilderness where John preached and baptized.
  - c. The metaphor indicated a flimsy reeds, weak and blown every way by the wind.
  - d. This is what the crowds were thinking in their minds and heart about John.
    - 1) That John was now doubting Jesus was the Messiah.
    - 2) That John was being weak, easily intimidated and vacillating like a reed.
  - d. The correct answer was NO! John was no pushover, but a man of faith with strong conviction understanding who Jesus was.
3. The second rehtorical question Jesus asked was if John was a wealthy aristocrate living in comfort, "But what did you go out to see?"

A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses." vs. 8

- a. The description was totally contrary to John, soft garment indicated a man of wealth, John was was not wealthy, but the son of the priestly family and wore a garment of camel's hair. Matt. 3:4
  - b. The crowds were thinking in their minds and heart John was not in the prison, but instead in Antipas' palace like a wealthy politician and could not be trusted.
  - c. The correct answer was NO! John was suffering imprisonment because he confronted Herod Antipas about his seduction of his brother's wife, divorcing his own wife and living in adultery.
  - d. Jesus affirmed what was in their hearts, "those who were soft clothing are in kings' houses", John was a man of the wilderness waiting on God, serving Him.
4. The third rhetorical question Jesus asked was if John was a messenger from God like all others in the past, "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? vs. 9a-b
- a. The call and office of a prophet was to the mouthpiece of God.
    - 1) To reveal the mind, heart and will of God.
    - 2) To faithfully speak to the people the word of God, even to death.

- b. This time Jesus declared the correct answer aloud, “Yes”. vs. 9c  
\* John was God’s prophet!
- c. The crowds were thinking in their hearts John failed or was a false prophet.  
\* “Let another man **praise you**, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips.” Prov. 27:2
- d. Jesus plainly accused them to be a generation like, a simlie, fickle children in the market place unwilling to play dance at a wedding or mourn at a funeral, referring to their rejection of John and Jesus, calling John an acetic having a demon and Jesus a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors, but wisdom is justified by her children. vs. 16-19
- e. The confirmation of John being a prophet was by the highest authority, “I say to you, and more than a prophet.” vs. 9d
  - 1) The word more “perissoteros” means exceeding, supremely supassing all the past prophets.
  - 2) John was the prophet inaugurating the New Era of the Kingdom of heaven, the forerunner of the Messiah, saw the arrival of the Messiah with his own eyes, heard the the Father’s voice at the baptism that Jesus was God’s Son

and pointed people to Jesus declaring He was the Lamb of God.

- B. The words of Jesus were a high tribute to John. vs. 10
  - 1. Jesus declared John was prophecied in Scripture, “For this is *he* of whom it is written.” vs. 10a
    - a. The word written refers to the Innearrant and Infalible word of God.
    - b. The words written were the predictions of God to take place at some future time.
  - 2. Jesus quoted the prophet, ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face.’ vs. 10b-c
    - a. Malachi was the prophet. Mal. 3:1
    - b. Malachi was the last prophet to speak in the Old Testament, 420-397 B.C.
    - c. Malachi declared repentance in view of their sin and the Lord’s coming.
    - d. John the propphet appears 400 year after declaring the exact same message, repent in view of your sins and the Lord’s coming.
  - 3. Jesus discribed the prophetic fulfillment of John in relation to Jesus, “Who will prepare Your way before You.” vs. 10d
    - a. John was to be the forunner of Jesus to announce His coming as the prophecies had predicted.
    - b. John did not know Jesus was the Messiah, until the baptism of Jesus, the

Father gave to John the sign to know as the Spirit in the form of a dove would descend upon Him. Jn. 1:31, 33

- c. John was six months older than Jesus, as well as cousin and when Mary walked in the house to see Elizebeth, John leaped in the womb of Elizebeth. Lk. 1;41

### **Illustration**

John was not like the man who said, “I am tire of talking about myself, what do you think about me?”

### **Application**

1. There will be times when people will have the wrong attitude towards some believers.
  - a. A person at time will be convinced a person is carnal because of what they have heard others say, when in fact they are very spiritual.
    - \* You and I need to correct their wrong perception that maligns that person!
  - b. A person at other times will be convinced a person is spiritual, but we know they are as carnal as a hot dog.
    - \* You and I need to make sure we don't gossip or malign a person, but if the person is a wolf or a danger spritually, then we warn them in love!
2. There are men and women who have been given high privilege during the church age, some we know, while other we do not know who they are!
  - a. Paul the apostle to the Gentiles.

- b. John the beloved, the longest living apostele to record the book of Revelation.
  - c. Men like Zwingly, Luther, Moody, Wheatfield, Wesely.
3. Men in our current days who have been faithful.
    - a. Like Billy Graham, Chuck Smith, etc.
    - b. Others are Pastors of small churches that would seem insignificant to us, but not to God!
      - \* “But he who glories, let him glory in the LORD. For not he who **commends** himself is approved, but whom the Lord **commends**.” 2Cor. 10:17-18
  4. People at time get fickle about a Pastor or church.
    - a. I can not receive from him or the Holy Spirit is not here, etc.
    - b. Or they are too political correct, rejecting the word.

***The exaltation of John was due to the people rejecting Jesus and John!***

### **III. The identification of John. vs. 11-15**

- A. Jesus declared John was the greatest one born to that day. vs. 11
  1. The revelation to be declared is absolutely true and reliable. vs. 11a
    - a. The word Assuredly “amen”, indicates something of great importance to be stated, appearing 101 times “verly, truly or Assuredly” in the New Testament.

- b. The same word appears 51 times as “amen” in the New Testament, at the end of a sentence to affirm what was stated, indicating “so be it”.
- 2. The authority Jesus is speaking under is His own authority, the highest and final regarding truth,” I say to you.’ vs. 11b
  - a. Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount quoted the dependency of man for their authority, “You have heard it has been said.”
  - b. Jesus did not refer to any human authority, but said, “I say unto you.”
- 3. The revelation regarded the high honor given to John, “among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist.” vs. 11c
  - a. Jesus said “not one has risen greater in the past.
    - 1) This passes up some great men, John was greater than Abraham, Moses or David and many others.
    - 2) John was used by God to break the 400-year silence of the prophets.
    - 3) Yet, John never did one miracle that we know of, interesting.
  - b. Jesus said “among those born of women”.
    - 1) John was born in direct answer to prayer, to a barren women advanced

- in years named Elizabeth, Zacharias was his father. Lk. 1:7, 13
- 2) John as we stated was called to be the forerunner of the Messiah, personally saw the Messiah and pointed people to the Him.
- 3) The greatness of John is due to his proximity to the Messiah and the inauguration of the age of grace.
- 4. The revelation also was that believer is greater than John, “but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” vs. 11d
  - a. Because the believer understands clearer the reality of the finished work of Jesus on the cross, the resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, let alone the incredible work of grace to sinners.
  - b. Because every believer understands better the kingdom will not be set up till after the church age, unlike John.
- B. Jesus declared the days of John marked a violent opposition against those offered salvation. vs. 12-15
  - 1. Jesus said that since John preached the gospel a great spiritual warfare to inder and keep sinners from being saved, “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the



kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. vs. 12

- a. This commentators say this is a difficult verse to interpret, some believe it means the Kingdom of heaven is suffering violence in opposition, others that the kingdom of God is making its way violently, still others that violent people enter the kingdom.
  - b. The phrase, suffer violence “biazo” means to inflict hostile force, an indicative present middle voice, indicating against the kingdom of heaven.
  - c) The word violent “biastes”, means to exert strong forcefulness that is qualified by the next word force “harpazo”, suddenly, violently snatched away, an indicative present active, going on constantly, by the way it is the same word for the rapture of the church.
  - d) I believe the text is saying that regardless of the violent spiritual opposition against the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven to hinder sinners to be saved, sinners are being saved by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- \* “The law and the prophets *were* until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.” Lk. 16:16

2. Jesus said John was the culmination of the prophets, “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” vs. 13
  - a. This verse explains verse 12 and distinguishes the two eras.
  - b. The law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.
  - c. The Messiah had arrived to save by grace through faith.
3. Jesus said John was the fulfillment of prophecy, “And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who is to come.” vs. 14
  - a. The prophecy is found in Malachi that has a two-fold fulfillment. “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.” Mal. 4:5-6
  - b. The short-term fulfillment was fulfilled by John, “He will also go before Him in the **spirit** and **power** of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Lk. 1:17
  - c. The long-term fulfillment will be Elijah himself as one of the two witnesses during the Great-Tribulation. Rev. 11:3-7

4. Jesus gave great importance to all He had revealed by commanding all to take heed is to all these truths, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” vs. 15
  - a. Those having an ear to hear are both in the present active, having the ability to hear are commanded to consider and believe what has been said.
  - b. These people hearing had the greater light than others in the past, therefore the greater responsibility and accountability.
  - c. They had heard the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist, proclaim His coming, confirmed His office at His baptism and pointed people to Jesus.
  - d. Yet they were disbelieving, opposing and rejecting John, Jesus and the gospel.

### Illustration

The history of man has always been divided by the birth of Christ B.C. and A.D. until of late the C.E.

### Application

1. What does God say about you and I?
  - a. Does He see us as a person of conviction?
  - b. Does He see us as a person of faith?
  - c. Does He see us as a person of no compromise?
  - d. Does He see us as His servants?
    - \* “His lord said to him, ‘**Well done**, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over

- many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” Matt. 25:23
2. The place you will spend eternity is up to you.
    - a. God has voted that you be saved.
    - b. Satan has voted that you be lost.
    - c. You are the one holding the vote to break the tie, you will determine whether you go to hell or heaven, no one else
      - \* “Then Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:38-39

***The identification of John was due to the new era introduced by John!***

### Conclusion

Jesus reproved the crowds for their wavering unbelief characterized by three things.

- I. The question of the disciples of John was due to the misunderstanding the Scriptures by John!
- II. The exaltation of John was due to the people rejecting Jesus and John!
- III. The identification of John was due to the new era introduced by John!