

## Lesson 12 Matthew 11.1-30 (cf. v.1)

### Jesus teaches re-the confusion and reaction to ministry

In this passage (Matthew 11.1-30) we have a most fascinating example of Jesus teaching without the company of His disciples. His disciples had been sent out on a national mission. He is part of that and it is His way of doing things that Matthew brings into focus-not his own or that of any other of the twelve.

#### *The impact of Jesus' ministry*

The report of what was now being done reached John in prison-possibly in Machaerus. His disciples brought the news of the works of Christ-though perhaps not the version in v.5 they eventually took back. "Blind men are getting back to work; lame people are living new and effective lives pain free; lepers are no longer shouting "unclean"; people who died are raised when Jesus is about and the poor are following Jesus and trusting Him for their future and eternity for the gospel is being speedily brought to them everywhere! (The Greek is *εὐαγγελίζω* which is the word for "conveying the good news" with the suffix that indicates *speed* or *haste*.) Still Herod was sitting on his throne and the Romans were in undisputed charge of the nation's affairs. Where was the kingdom? and why was he not released? John asked Jesus directly, "Are we to seek someone entirely different (Greek like our "heterogeneous" *ετερος*)

#### *Blessed is he who is not offended in me*

Jesus gave John a tremendous spiritual boost as his disciples prepared to leave. He opened the warmest possible encomium of that great man's life-a tribute as vigorous as any defence-and one that would prove a valedictory. "What did you go out once to see? a reed fluttering like a sail in the wind? a man clothed in soft garments? Such as are in the palaces of kings are repeatedly clothed in *silk*." The Lord was commending John for faithfulness not obsequiousness and sycophantic speech. He recognised his prophetic role as unique and as a fulfilment of Malachi 3.1. He added another massive tribute-Never was greater born of a woman." Now Jesus was not just issuing an encouragement or giving a tribute-He was teaching-as we shall now see.

#### *The kingdom of heaven on the stage of history*

The very least disciple of Christ who has received Jesus as Lord is greater than John the Baptist. Thus the encomium over the reality is that in the kingdom of grace under the outpouring of the Holy Spirit true nobility of soul is read by humble loving obedience and grace of life.

Besides the kingdom of heaven was snatched up in the interim of opportunity under John and until Jesus there were many pressing into it in big groups who though aware of sin repentance righteousness prayer and fasting and subject to the conviction and operation of the Spirit were not aware of the work of the Spirit in the intimate way we know-their faith worked by direction of the prophet rather than by love of Jesus. It was a penumbral period when prophet and law were matched to greater awareness of the kingdom.

#### *An era of confused responses*

Had the Jews who received John thoroughly turned to Christ it might be argued that this window of opportunity would have given way to a door of world change -but actually that option does not exist at any time in history-for what must be must be and the cross was a divinely-planned historical necessity for man's redemption. Yet was John Elijah for those who could enter the joy of "heaven on earth" by being born from above. For the rest they were unwilling to dance to the music of John-calling his Nazarite law-keeping & fasting demonic and the compassionate involvement of Christ loose living. But the grace and power of Christ -the wisdom of God-is seen in the nature and character of the child of God and the life of faith.

#### *Repentance and mighty works*

Jesus matched John's message of Repentance when preaching at this time to Bethsaida and Chorazin and Capernaum. He added that if they had repented they would avoid such judgement as Sodom & Gomorrah suffered and vice-versa these cities had they experienced the work of Christ enabled by the Holy Spirit-such as the casting out of demons and the indwelling of the life of the Spirit- they would have repented and remained.

The vital difference comes in by the "Abba Father" prayer and the renewal of the Holy Ghost.

#### *The "new borns" of Jesus*

Our Lord in prayer voiced his absolute confession and commitment to the Fathers revelation by the Spirit so that not people who are the world's wise but "those who will feed on the milk of the word"(Greek *μαθηται* have the veil lifted and see the method and sort of the kingdom. Such hear the call to have the burden of law-keeping lifted and to rest in the work of atonement that Jesus effected. These took up his "easy" yoke



#### *Paper to Practice*

How did Jesus encourage John?

How did Jesus show the reaction of men to orthodoxy and compassion?

What needs to be mixed with "Repentance" to make a life-changing gospel?

Nothing pleased Jesus more than children drinking in the milk of the word so that their B\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ could be lifted!