

# Christ's Silence (3).

by Andrew Bonar

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*Christ's silence regarding John's death is a reminder that our lives are not defined by our circumstances, but by our relationship with Him.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 11:1

**Topics:** "Trust in God's Plan", "The Silence of God"

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## Description

Andrew Bonar reflects on the silence of Christ in response to John the Baptist's imprisonment and eventual death, emphasizing the mystery of God's ways and the importance of trusting in His wisdom and love. He highlights that Christ's lack of mourning for John signifies a deeper understanding of life and resurrection, urging believers to focus on their relationship with God rather than their circumstances. Bonar encourages the faithful to recognize their worth in Christ and to understand that true greatness comes from having Christ in their hearts, regardless of worldly recognition or suffering.

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## Transcript

Matthew 11:1-11

JOHN the Baptist lay in prison unnoticed, and we may say uncared for, for nearly a year. How mysterious! No wonder he sent to ask the Master if there was any explanation of this. 'Art Thou He that should come? Is this like the Messiah?' Christ's answer to the disciples of John was, 'Tell your master what I am doing, and have been doing. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed.' With this message they were dismissed, only that the Master said as they left, 'Tell John not to be stumbled at My dealings with him. Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.' Infer from other things, not from circumstances, how you stand toward the Lord, and how He stands toward you. Learn the heart of the Lord by what He has done for you. Think of Him who gave Himself for us, and trust Him. Never distrust the Father, never distrust the Son, but confide in their wisdom and lovingkindness. Wait till you see the end of all affliction. Learn to read your title to the family of God by what God has said, not by a special message to yourself. It would be so satisfactory to us if we could get an individual message from the Lord; but He does not do this. He did not do it to John the Baptist. Notice particularly:

I. The circumstances of John's death.--The one incident we hear of in John's imprisonment is the message sent by his disciples. It is curious that at the very time John was in prison, Christ sent out His twelve disciples to preach. He left His Forerunner in prison and sent out the twelve! 'Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.' There John lies in prison,--the man who came in the spirit and power of

Elijah, but no chariot of fire carried him upward without tasting death. No, he sank in loneliness into the grave. Yet there had not arisen 'a greater prophet than John the Baptist.' Who is the man who is greater than others? The man who has most of Christ in his heart. This is God's test. What place has Christ in your heart? That will determine how you stand before God. You may be neglected, you may pass through the world, and the world may not take much notice of you, and God's people may not. God may give you the treatment He gave to the Baptist. Instead of letting him think he deserved any honour at the hand of the Lord, the Lord was emptying him of self and putting him on the level of other sinners. It was just as He did with Moses. The man who wrought such wonders might have been tempted to think he stood upon a higher footing than the people of Israel. So when he sinned, God made him feel it was the sin of a highly-favoured man; it was more than an ordinary sin. So he was self-emptied. God may use a man to do great things, but that does not give him any merit. It gives him responsibility.

II. Christ's silence regarding John's death.--'The disciples went and told Jesus.' He said nothing, He made no mourning. They mourned thirty days for Aaron, but when the greatest of the prophets died there was no mourning. There was always meaning in Christ's silence, as there was at Bethany. It was not that He felt little, but because His heart was full. 'Come ye yourselves apart into the desert-place,' He says, 'and let us talk over it, and think over it.' But He said nothing more. He did not send any threatening message to Herod. He left him without a word. He gave him up. It is not a man's death that is so important in Christ's eyes. It is his life and his resurrection. John in his prison heard the sound of mirth and revelry above him in the palace, when suddenly he is ushered into the presence of his Lord, and hears the songs of the redeemed above! The head that was so mocked is now crowned with glory. Whatever may happen to you in another year, will you be able so to trust the love of the Lord? Though you should be in abject poverty, or in bodily pain, still you will be able to say with Paul, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.'

III. Christ's thoughts of John.--John's death is like Abel's, silent, lonely, unheeded. Yet Jesus calls him 'righteous Abel.' It is like Antipas in Pergamos, condemned, put to death; and God says, 'My faithful martyr.' He says of John, 'He was a burning and a shining light.' He says, 'It was not for nothing you went out--not to see the reeds by the Jordan--no, you sought a man worth seeing. You saw a real prophet, the greatest of them all.' The prophet prophesied of by Malachi! And remember you may be greater than he in the coming kingdom of glory; you in heaven may be greater than he on earth.

He says of John's influence, 'From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence,' etc. (Matt. 11:12), such was the earnestness he awakened, such vehement desire. And his shall be the honour (Dan. 12: 3).

He says of the peculiar fulness of his preaching (Matt. 11: 13,14 and Luke 16:16), all others only foretold what was coming. He stood and pointed out the reality come. He preached the King and the Gospel of the kingdom. He says, in a word, that he was truly an Elias. In him the prophecy of Malachi 4: 5 had got a first fulfilment. How Christ's heart toward John is seen in these words! Ah, is not this the way He will speak of each faithful one at His coming? 'Well done, good and faithful servant!' 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!'

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