

Matthew 11:7-17. Jesus Commends John the Baptist.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

Jesus commends John the Baptist for his honor of Christ and declares that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.

Scripture: Genesis 32:26, 1 Samuel 2:30, Malachi 4:5, Matthew 11:11-12

Topics: "Faithful Preaching", "Kingdom Of Heaven"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches about the honor God bestows on those who honor Him, using John the Baptist as an example of someone greatly honored by Christ. Jesus emphasizes the importance of spiritual insight over worldly splendor, highlighting how those who believe in Him have a deeper understanding of salvation than even John did. He warns about the violence the kingdom of heaven faces from worldly persecutors and affirms John as the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding Elijah's return, despite the disbelief of many. This passage serves as a reminder to evaluate the impact of faithful preaching on our hearts and urges us to earnestly strive for salvation despite the challenges we may face.

Transcript

God has said, "those who honor me I will honor."--(1 Sam. 2:30.) John the Baptist honored Christ much in his preaching, and now we hear how greatly Christ honored him. The Lord, who knows all men, declared that no prophet greater than John had ever appeared. Elijah, who raised the widow's son, was not greater; for though John had performed no miracle, he knew more of Christ than any who had come before him.

Jesus reminded the people of the time when John preached in the wilderness, and asked them why they had gone there. Was it to see one of the reeds, shaken by the wind? No! they had not gone to see a common sight, but to see an extraordinary sight. Was it a magnificent worldly sight that they had gone into the wilderness to see? No! if they had desired to behold splendor and magnificence they would not have gone into the wilderness to search for it. It is kings in their palaces who are arrayed in gorgeous dazzling garments; whereas John the Baptist was only clothed in skins, and a leather belt; there was nothing to please the eye in his appearance. Why then had they gone into the wilderness? To hear a prophet. Jesus reminded the people of this, to show them how much spiritual good they ought to have gained from their visits to the wilderness. But many had derived no benefit from these visits; if they had, they would have received Christ as the Son of God, for John had preached concerning him.

Jesus then declared that the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater even than John. The Lord had come to establish the kingdom of heaven upon earth. He had come to shed his blood for the sins of men. Those who believe in the crucified Savior are greater in knowledge than John the Baptist; for they know the way of salvation more fully than he did. We live in the latter days, and God has spoken to us by his Son, and by his apostles, the least of whom was a greater prophet than John. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

What did Jesus mean by the expression, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force?" By the violent, we believe, He meant those worldly people who persecute his servants. As John had suffered imprisonment, and would also suffer death, for preaching the truth, so from his days would all the faithful servants of the Lord be subjected to much suffering for their Master's sake. Violent men would endeavor to rob and destroy by force the kingdom of heaven.

Then the Lord made a declaration that must have surprised many of those who heard him. He said that John was the Elijah spoken of by Malachi in the last chapter of his prophecy. (Mal. 4:5.) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord." John was not Elijah himself, but he had come in the spirit and power of Elijah, being fervent in spirit and great in power, turning sinners to the Lord. Yet Jesus knew that many would not believe what he was now declaring, for he said, "If you will receive it, this is Elijah that was for to come. He who has ears to hear let him hear."

We see from this passage, that Jesus knows what advantages we have enjoyed, and what use we have made of them. Have we heard faithful and impressive preachers? What effect have their sermons had upon our hearts? Have we been persuaded to strive earnestly to enter the kingdom of heaven? If we merely float down the stream, we shall at length be plunged into an abyss of misery. The tide is against us, and the wind is contrary. We must be anxious and earnest. The prayer of Jacob suits every perishing sinner, "I will not let you go, except you bless me."

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