

John Wesley's Explanatory Notes - Matthew 11

by John Wesley

Jesus praises John the Baptist and explains the nature of the kingdom of heaven, emphasizing the importance of being buried with Christ and having a more perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 11:2-6, Matthew 11:11, Matthew 11:20-30

Topics: "Faith in Christ", "The Invitation to Rest"

Description

John Wesley expounds on Matthew 11, emphasizing the significance of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ and the fulfillment of prophecy. He highlights the importance of faith in recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, as well as the blessings that come to those who are not offended by Him. Wesley also discusses the contrasting responses of the cities to Jesus' ministry, warning of the consequences of unbelief and the invitation to find rest in Christ. He encourages believers to take on the yoke of Jesus, which is gentle and leads to true peace.

Transcript

XI. 1. In their cities - The other cities of Israel.

Verse 2. He sent two of his disciples - Not because he doubted himself; but to confirm their faith. Luke 7:18.

Verse 3. He that is to come - The Messiah.

Verse 4. Go and tell John the things that ye hear and see - Which are a stronger proof of my being the Messiah, than any bare assertion can be.

Verse 5. The poor have the Gospel preached to them - The greatest mercy of all. Isaiah 29:18; .

Verse 6. Happy is he who shall not be offended at me - Notwithstanding all these proofs that I am the Messiah.

Verse 7. As they departed, he said concerning John - Of whom probably he would not have said so much when they were present. A reed shaken by the wind? - No; nothing could ever shake John in the testimony he gave to the truth. The expression is proverbial.

Verse 8. A man clothed in soft, delicate raiment - An effeminate courtier, accustomed to fawning and flattery? You may expect to find persons of such a character in palaces; not in a wilderness.

Verse 9. More than a prophet - For the prophets only pointed me out afar off; but John was my immediate forerunner.

Verse 10. Malachi 3:1.

Verse 11. But he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he - Which an ancient author explains thus:-"One perfect in the law, as John was, is inferior to one who is baptized into the death of Christ. For this is the kingdom of heaven, even to be buried with Christ, and to be raised up together with him. John was greater than all who had been then born of women, but he was cut off before the kingdom of heaven was given." [He seems to mean, that righteousness, peace, and joy, which constitute the present inward kingdom of heaven.] "He was blameless as to that righteousness which is by the law; but he fell short of those who are perfected by the spirit of life which is in Christ. Whosoever, therefore, is least in the kingdom of heaven, by Christian regeneration, is greater than any who has attained only the righteousness of the law, because the law maketh nothing perfect." It may farther mean, the least true Christian believer has a more perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ, of his redemption and kingdom, than John the Baptist had, who died before the full manifestation of the Gospel.

Verse 12. And from the days of John - That is, from the time that John had fulfilled his ministry, men rush into my kingdom with a violence like that of those who are taking a city by storm.

Verse 13. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John - For all that is written in the law and the prophets only foretold as distant what is now fulfilled. In John the old dispensation expired, and the new began. Luke 16:16.

Verse 14. Malachi 4:5.

Verse 15. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear - A kind of proverbial expression; requiring the deepest attention to what is spoken.

Verse 16. This generation - That is, the men of this age. They are like those froward children of whom their fellows complain, that they will be pleased no way.

Verse 18. John came neither eating nor drinking - In a rigorous austere way, like Elijah. And they say, He hath a devil - Is melancholy, from the influence of an evil spirit.

Verse 19. The Son of man came eating and drinking - Conversing in a free, familiar way. Wisdom is justified by her children - That is, my wisdom herein is acknowledged by those who are truly wise.

Verse 20. Then began he to upbraid the cities - It is observable he had never upbraided them before. Indeed at first they received him with all gladness, Capernaum in particular.

Verse 21. Wo to thee, Chorazin - That is, miserable art thou. For these are not curses or imprecations, as has been commonly supposed; but a solemn, compassionate declaration of the misery they were bringing on themselves. Chorazin and Bethsaida were cities of Galilee, standing by the lake Gennesareth. Tyre and Sidon were cities of Phenicia, lying on the sea shore. The inhabitants of them were heathens. Luke 10:13. 22, 24. Moreover I say unto you - Beside the general denunciation of wo to those stubborn

unbelievers, the degree of their misery will be greater than even that of Tyre and Sidon, yea, of Sodom.

Verse 23. Thou Capernaum, who hast been exalted to heaven - That is, highly honoured by my presence and miracles.

Verse 24. See note ... "Mt 11:22"].

Verse 25. Jesus answering - This word does not always imply, that something had been spoken, to which an answer is now made. It often means no more than the speaking in reference to some action or circumstance preceding. The following words Christ speaks in reference to the case of the cities above mentioned: I thank thee -That is, I acknowledge and joyfully adore the justice and mercy of thy dispensations: Because thou hast hid - That is, because thou hast suffered these things to be hid from men, who are in other respects wise and prudent, while thou hast discovered them to those of the weakest understanding, to them who are only wise to Godward. Luke 10:21.

Verse 27. All things are delivered to me - Our Lord, here addressing himself to his disciples, shows why men, wise in other things, do not know this: namely, because none can know it by natural reason: none but those to whom he revealeth it.

Verse 28. Come to me - Here he shows to whom he is pleased to reveal these things to the weary and heavy laden; ye that labour - After rest in God: and are heavy laden - With the guilt and power of sin: and I will give you rest - I alone (for none else can) will freely give you (what ye cannot purchase) rest from the guilt of sin by justification, and from the power of sin by sanctification.

Verse 29. Take my yoke upon you - Believe in me: receive me as your prophet, priest, and king. For I am meek and lowly in heart - Meek toward all men, lowly toward God: and ye shall find rest - Whoever therefore does not find rest of soul, is not meek and lowly. The fault is not in the yoke of Christ: but in thee, who hast not taken it upon thee. Nor is it possible for any one to be discontented, but through want of meekness or lowliness.

Verse 30. For my yoke is easy - Or rather gracious, sweet, benign, delightful: and my burden - Contrary to those of men, is ease, liberty, and honour.

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