

A CHARACTER STUDY OF
JOHN THE BAPTIST

Lesson 6

JESUS SPEAKS OF JOHN

Part 2

Matthew 11:2-19

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Adult Sunday school Class

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“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Matthew 11:13 -15

John the Baptist was a strong preacher of righteousness. He cried out loudly against the sins of Israel. King Herod had sinned greatly in taking Herodias as his wife. *“But Herod the tetrarch, being reprovved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.”* (Luke 3:19-20) The Pharisees and the Sadducees had sent the priests out into the wilderness to see just what John was doing. They had taken counsel together to hinder the work of both Jesus and John. They hated the peaching that was aimed against them and had determined to do what ever it took

to hinder their work. Now John is in prison and wondering if Jesus was really who he had believed He was. "In that terrible conflict John overcame, as we all must overcome. His very despair opened the door of hope." (Edersheim. Vol 1. P. 668.) John knew moments of doubt. He sent to Jesus the significant question, "*Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?*" Matt. 11:3B) Yet, in his question there is an assurance of faith. By sending this question to Jesus, he is attesting to his faith in the true person of Jesus as the Messiah. "When he sent his disciples with this question straight to Christ, He had already conquered; for such a question addressed to a possibly false Messiah has no meaning." (IBID.) The lesson to believers today is this. There will come times of doubt. Whatever the question we grapple with, the answer lies in this: whether doubt will lead us to Christ, or from Christ. Doubt will weaken our faith or strengthen it. We must submit our doubt to Christ and allow Him to answer of question. As the disciples of John returned, Jesus addressed the crowd who were standing by and had

overheard the exchange between Jesus and the followers of John. “He to Whom John had formerly borne testimony, now bore testimony to him; and that, not in the hour when John had testified for Him, but when His testimony had wavered and almost failed.” (IBID. P. 669) Jesus’ testimony of John was of high praise. Jesus spoke of John as a strong man who was not blown about the winds of popular opinion. His dress and food were not like the pampered followers of Herod or the priests and Pharisees. He knew want and discipline of life. He was a prophet and yet he was more than a prophet. “The Lord ranks John as greater than the prophets because he had a unique task: being the forerunner of the Messiah.” (Custer. P. 168) That being said Jesus said that the least person in the kingdom would be greater than John. Greater because he would have “greater perception of God’s providential plan than John could have.” (Custer. P. 168)

In Matthew’s account we read a rather statement that Jesus makes regarding the kingdom of heaven. “*And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of*

heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” (Matthew 11:12) Alfred Edersheim said of this verse, “From the time that John began to preach the kingdom, hindrances of every kind had been raised. To overcome them and enter the Kingdom, it required, as it were, violence like that to enter a city which was surrounded by a hostile army.” (Edersheim. P. 670) The meaning of Matthew 11:12 is, “that they were pressing into the kingdom of God past the opposition of the Devil, the world, the scribes and Pharisees, and others who would detract from Christ’s teaching.” (Custer. P. 169)

Finally, Jesus said John was the last of the Old Testament prophets. The leaders of Israel rejected him. Had they believed his message he would have been for them just like Elijah, as was foretold in Malachi 4:5-6.

John knew what it was like to doubt his faith. He wondered if Jesus was who he had said He was. Jesus assured him that the work of Messiah was being accomplished just as the Scriptures said it would. John never lived to see all that Jesus did. He accomplished the call of God for his life.

The Gospel of the King, A Commentary on Matthew. By Stewart Custer PhD. Bob Jones University Press. Greenville, SC. 2005.

Commentary on the Gospel of Luke. By Norval Geldenhuys B.A., B.D., Th.M. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah. By Alfred Edersheim. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1971.

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