

MATTHEW 11

THE NATIVES ARE RESTLESS

Hitting is contagious! That is something you hear in baseball circles. What it means is that once a couple of players start to hit, the others tend to follow suit. There are many other things in life that work the same way. Excitement, fear, and the flu are the same. But there is another enemy that is contagious – that is doubt. Today we will see how doubts about Jesus' ministry are beginning to surface among the people of the Galilee. Eventually these doubts will manifest in outright opposition to Jesus.

ILUSTRATION

1 Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.

2 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples 3 and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 5 The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

John the Baptist burst onto the scene some time back, preaching a message of repentance and baptism, declaring the Messiah and kingdom were at hand. He gained a large following but was stopped in his tracks when he called out Herod Antipas in public concerning his illicit relationship with his brother's wife. For that John was imprisoned and eventually beheaded. At this time he is still in prison approximately 100 miles to the south.

Keep in mind that John declared Jesus to be the Messiah when he baptized Him. He also knew that he (John) must decrease as Jesus increased. Now, after a time in prison, he now doubts if Jesus is the Messiah. So he sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus in person. Also keep in mind that John's disciples have already

questioned why Jesus' disciples didn't fast as they did. So there has been some tension and doubt building for some time between the two camps.

Jesus responded with a quotation from Isaiah 29. This section of Isaiah deals with Jesus scolding the people of Jerusalem for their pride and unbelief. There are some woes in this section. Eventually Isaiah goes on to say that Jesus will restore Jerusalem and send a deliverer. That is the context that would have been understood by John regarding Jesus' response. This is a mild rebuke from Jesus regarding John's doubt. Jesus put it in an historical as well as a prophetic perspective for him.

Jesus then turns His attention to the people around Him as He sees they have some of the same doubts as John.

7 As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. 10 For this is he of whom it is written:

*'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
Who will prepare Your way before You.'*

11 "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

16 "But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, 17 and saying:

*'We played the flute for you,
And you did not dance;
We mourned to you,
And you did not lament.'*

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children."

Jesus turns to the people and pays tribute to John. He asks three rhetorical questions.

“What did you go out to see?”

- A reed shaken by the wind? (Vacillating) No! A prophet!
- A man clothed in fine clothes? No! Those men are in king’s houses.
- A Prophet? Yes and more than a prophet! For this is he of whom it is written. (Mal. 3:1) The last prophecy of the OT.
- Among men born of women there has not risen one greater than John. Why? Because he was the one who prepared the way of the Lord and helped to usher in the kingdom.
- Born of women? Natural birth as opposed to a rebirth. This is why he who is least in the kingdom is greater than John. (John is considered to be an OT prophet)
- The kingdom suffering violence? This speaks of the opposition John and Jesus are facing since they proclaimed the coming of the kingdom, whether from the religious establishment or someone like Herod.
- “If you are willing to accept it, John is Elijah.” Jesus tribute to John peaks with a powerful testimony to the role John has played. “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” John is the culmination of a long line of prophets that spoke of the coming Messiah.
- The telescoping of prophecy. (Near/ far)
- John denied he was Elijah. Yet Luke 1:7 designated John as the one that would minister in the “spirit and power of Elijah.”
- Mal. 3:1

**1 “Behold, I send My messenger,
And he will prepare the way before Me.
And the Lord, whom you seek,
Will suddenly come to His temple,
Even the Messenger of the covenant,
In whom you delight.
Behold, He is coming,”
Says the Lord of hosts.**

Mal. 4:5,6

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet

Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

6 And he will turn

The hearts of the fathers to the children,

And the hearts of the children to their fathers,

Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

- Mal. 3:1; 4:5,6 - state that Elijah would come prior to the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. (Telescoping) John is a type of Elijah. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

16 "But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, 17 and saying:

'We played the flute for you,

And you did not dance;

We mourned to you,

And you did not lament.'

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children."

Now Jesus illustrates how neither He nor John can win with the generation to whom they are ministering.

- Children's games – some don't want to play. Dichotomy
- John was an ascetic. Jesus was seen as a partier.
- They can't win. The people want to force them into their own idea of what their ministries and message should be.
- Wisdom and her children. An idiom. Wisdom was seen in the feminine sense. Jesus and John will be vindicated when their true wisdom and testimonies come to fruition.

The Rebuke

Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of

judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

- Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. The evangelical triangle, where most of Jesus' ministry took place. Capernaum being His HQ. All the miracles should have brought them to repentance, but most still rejected the message.
- These Jewish cities are compared to the "cream of the crop" of the pagan cities.
- They will fare better in the Day of judgment than the cities in the triangle.
- Why? Because they didn't hear the message and have the light of the cities in which Jesus ministered.
- Once we hear the message we are responsible for responding. God is just and will temper His judgment according to the amount of light to which we have been exposed.
- **Luke 12:48**
- **48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.**
- BTW, there is virtually nothing left of any of these cities now.

The Prayer and the Call

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. 26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

Remember earlier when answering John, Jesus referenced Isaiah 29? It dealt with the pride and unbelief of the people of Jerusalem. Pride seems to affect those that are thought to be wise and learned. They are the ones that typically rejected Jesus. It is the humble person who hears and receives the wisdom of the Gospel.

Mt.5: 3-6

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit,

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn,

For they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek,

For they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

For they shall be filled.

Mark 10:15

15 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

Babe – humble, not naïve.

27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

- Don't tell me Jesus never claimed to be God.
- "To whom the Son wills to reveal Him?" To whom does He will to reveal Himself? Those that want to hear. This is why He extends the invitation to everyone in the next verse. This goes along with what Jesus told His disciples regarding to whom was "worthy" to hear the Gospel.
- My yoke – Jesus was a carpenter. The yoke is that of the Law.

APPLICATION:

- Dealing with doubts. They are contagious. Be honest, but be careful not to be a stumbling block.
- When our experiences don't rise to the level of our expectations.

- Those seeking rest.
- There are many different people who come to a worship service on a weekly basis. The ones searching for rest are of special importance. They

may need rest from an over-bearing boss or an unsympathetic spouse. Or it may be a faithful parent with a wayward child. It may be a young person dealing with a tragedy or a loveless home situation. Whatever it is, they often come with doubts to a worship service. They are seeking some kind of resolution in their heart as to God's control over their situation.

If God is in control, why am I in this situation? The short answer is that poor decisions have most likely been made. Maybe these decisions weren't made by the person in the service but they are still affected. In order to find rest, we have to give these things to God and allow Him to work the out. This is our only recourse when our expectations don't meet our experience. If God is in control, then we must "allow" Him to work things out in His time. If we take up His yoke, then we must understand that we are still pulling a load, but it isn't nearly as heavy as pulling it ourselves.

If John the Baptist, this great prophet had questions, then it is all right for us to have questions as well. But let us be careful when and to whom we ask them so as not to be a stumbling block to others.

At some point, the FACT that God is sovereign and in control will set up shop in our hearts and become a pillar upon which we build our lives. When this revelation becomes foundational, then we can move forward, no matter what the situation is.

Questions for home groups:

- Can we be honest as to having doubts?
- What are those doubts?
- What happened that caused those doubts to be put away?
- Were they put away? (eased?)
- Have we found someone in the church with doubts to help? They are there. Believe me.
- Can we put ourselves in their shoes long enough to empathize with them as Jesus did us?