

Matthew 11

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Having found some encouragement in reading the 11th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, I felt inclined to put down a few thoughts, and I'm now transferring them to this tape. I trust that any who listen to it might get some encouragement and refreshment, just as I have done myself in reading the chapter. And I do trust, of course, that whatever else you do, if you're going to listen to this tape, that you do read the 11th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew first of all.

I do not, of course, go into any detail as to the background to this chapter, excepting [00:01:05] to say that we've arrived, obviously, at a very critical juncture in the ways of God so far as Israel is concerned.

John Baptist, according to verse 2, is in prison, and obviously his faith has been tried.

He has heard in the prison the works of Christ, and sends two of his disciples to him to ask, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

Every saint and servant of the Lord, at some time or other in his history, is tested.

John Baptist was being sorely tested.

[00:02:02] Obviously, his being cast into prison augurs the rejection of the Messiah whose coming he prophesied.

And so, our blessed Lord answers these who come from John Baptist with John's inquiry, saying, go and show John again those things which you do hear and see.

What you hear, his words.

What you see, his works.

The works might be taken account of by the natural senses, without the heart and conscience being reached, but his word deals with heart and conscience.

[00:03:05] And it would be good for us all if whilst we read with wonder some of the many miraculous works of our blessed Lord, take account of the perfection of his blessed pathway, that we might sit as discreet as it were, and hear his word, that every one of us might be rightly, morally adjusted in our

lives, in our service, individually, in relation to the saints collectively.

So I just repeat, whilst his works might be wondered at, his word, if heartened to, will reach heart and conscience in the light of the knowledge of God, revealed by him.

[00:04:01] As to his works, Lord Jesus said, the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are claimed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

So here in verses four to six, we have the Lord's witness to John Baptist.

And in these wonderful sayings, in verse five, we are given, so to speak, the credentials of Jehovah's Anointed, the true King of Israel, Messiah.

And Isaiah himself not much earlier said, in chapter thirty-five for instance of Isaiah, [00:05:04] I'll read two or three verses, they're very interesting, from verse one, The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy in singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not, behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with recompense, he will come and save you. And then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, [00:06:02] then shall the lame man leap his own heart, and the tongue of the dumb sin, for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

This chapter of course in Isaiah looks on to the world to come, when the ransom of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall certainly, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. But whilst obviously the prophet looks right on to the coming day of the kingdom glory, when our blessed Lord shall be acknowledged by the ranks of Israel, there are certain signs here in the words of our blessed Lord, as we have them referred to here in verse [00:07:02] 5 of Matthew 11, that demonstrate clearly that he is the one who shall bring in the blessing of the world to come in the coming kingdom. Then of course according to Isaiah, our God shall come with vengeance, even God with a recompense is going to deal with the enemies of his people and put them down. Before that day dawns, the day of judgment upon the Gentile enemies, the day when he will deal with the oppressors of his people, before that day, Messiah has been presented in infinite mercy, and here he is sending this message to John, to tell him by the lips of his disciples, that this blessed person in regard to whom he is inquiring, has all the credentials that the prophets predicated of the coming Messiah. [00:08:05] And so in these verses, speaking as he does to John, he reassures him as to the correctness of his testimony, John's testimony, and he administers a gentle rebuke in verse 6 of Matthew 11, blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me, and yet in verses 7 to 11, Jesus vindicates John, his messenger, John is no reed shaken by the wind, despite of the question that he sent to our Lord, neither was he popular in this world, king's palaces are not his habitat, nay, the prison had received him, he was more than a prophet, [00:09:05] for he was the immediate forerunner of the Lord, he was privileged to stand and contemplate his Lord, and proclaim as we have the record given to us in the first chapter of John's gospel, this is he of whom I speak, not only did John prophesy, but he himself was the subject of prophecy, he was prophesied of, in verses 9 and 10 of this gospel, chapter 11 of course that we are referring to, we learn that John Baptist was unique amongst God's servants, he is more than a

prophet, for the aforementioned reason, that he himself [00:10:04] was the subject of prophecy, and he had the blessed privilege of seeing his prophecy fulfilled in the incoming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is greater, born of women, known like John Baptist, he stood and witnessed at the close of one dispensation, whilst looking upon the threshold of a new dispensation, a dispensation in which he had no part, hence as our Lord says, the little one in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he, that is dispensationally and positionally, the least in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than the Baptist, now the question of moral greatness, now the question of greatness and faithfulness of service, [00:11:10] is greatness in position, the new dispensation, is being introduced by the Lord Jesus Christ in the presentation of himself, John has pointed him out and so he stands so to speak, at the parting of the ways, he might say that the kingdom of heaven is not fair enough, where the rights of the earth rejected, yet heaven accepted, Christ our own, forgiveness, justification, the gift of the spirit, the knowledge of God as revealed in Christ, all are the privileged portion of even a little one in the kingdom of heaven, and so according to verse 12 of Matthew 11, [00:12:01] such was the bitter opposition to the kingdom as presented by our Lord in testimony, that only those who had the faith and virtue to break through this opposition, would enter into it. In chapter 7 of the gospel we read, verses 13 and 14, enter ye in at the straight gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat, because straight is the gate, because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that findeth, who are the few, these whom our Lord speaks of in verse 12, [00:13:01] when he says from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent take it by force, such is the awful panoply of opposition, such the hatred expended against this that our blessed Lord was presented, that only those who are prepared to break through, so to speak, in the energy of faith and moral courage, would take it. And that's the reason why our blessed Lord says, the violent take it by force. And as we have said, we are standing here at this point in the gospel, on the threshold of the parting of the ways, the change of dispensation, and our Lord has said, for all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, the prophets and the law. [00:14:08] The law was given, of course, and when the prophets were brought in, it was because of the awful breakdown in relation to the matter of obeying the law. The prophets were raised up of God to recall the people to that from which they had departed. But all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, and our Lord said, and if you will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. This statement, of course, would carry us right back to the end of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi, chapter 4, for instance, verse 5. Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day [00:15:04] of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers. Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. And so our blessed Lord says here, if you will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. John came in the spirit and character of Elijah, and if Israel had accepted his testimony, all the blessings of the kingdom would have been brought in and administered, for they would have responded to John's testimony, and they would have received him, of whom he prophesied, our Lord Jesus Christ. So he that hath ears to hear, said our Lord, let him hear.

[00:16:04] Then he says, but whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the market, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, we piped unto you, you have not danced, mourned unto you, you have not lamented. For John came, neither eating nor drinking. How austere he seemed to be, how separate he was, how he abstained from the luxuries that men were setting themselves upon. The Lord Jesus says, they said of him, he hath a devil. Then he says as to himself, a son of man came, eating and drinking, moving amongst men and women. We read, of course, in another gospel, these blessed words, that those who caviled against him said, [00:17:03] this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And so the Lord Jesus says here in verse 19 of Matthew 11,

a son of man came eating and drinking, how accessible he was. And they say, behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. Thank God that he was such, the mercy of God, a visiting man in the person of the Christ of God. But, ceci, wisdom is justified of her children. Peculiar expression? It plainly means, does it not, that wisdom, the wisdom of God, had acted in the best possible way.

And those who in the simplicity of faith had accepted the despised Nazarene [00:18:10] as the King of Israel, the Messiah, they set to their seal that wisdom had acted rightly in trusting the Christ. They justified God's approach to them in the person of the lowly, gracious, yet, thank God, glorious Nazarene. Yes, he came just the right way, right down to where they were. Seeking, not the righteous, but calling sinners to repentance, for the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost, as we read elsewhere. [00:19:05] And just now he began to abrade the cities, verses 20 to 24, wherein most of his mighty works were done. He abrades them because they repented not, and he pronounces war upon them. And he compares them unfavorably, with Tyre and Sidon, and Sodom, and speaks of the coming day of judgment. This indicates to us the awful disposition of these religious, bigoted views, the disposition of enmity, of hatred and rejection against the Lord Jesus Christ. And refusing him, they lay themselves open to the just judgment of [00:20:08] God. And so the Lord says, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. As to Capernaum, which had been made our Lord's own city in his gospel, thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, because the Christ had resided there, thou shall be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works which had been done, and they had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. Judgment lies ahead for them, yet mercy was standing, so to speak, on the very threshold, opening its arms [00:21:01] and extending them to them. And yet, as he says elsewhere, ye would not come unto me that you might have life. And at that time, oh I think this is indescribably blessed, at that time, the time of his rejection, the time of the sorry buff, the time of his refusal, the time of his being despised and rejected of men, the time when they saw no beauty that they should desire him, the time when he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, just then, at that time, Jesus answered. He gave his answer to the rebuffs. He gave his answer to the reproaches. He gave his [00:22:02] answer to the scorn, to the shame. At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, how blessed, as we view our Lord at this point in the gospel, he ever found a sweet retreat in his communion with the Father. And even though this gospel presents him peculiarly as son of David and son of Abraham, we must remember he is none less than the son of the Father. And in the unbrokenness of this communion, which had subsisted from eternity, brought into manhood with all its blessed charms, in the unbrokenness of that communion, he says, I thank thee, Father. And he says, Lord, he describes the Father here as Lord of heaven and of earth. If this is so, [00:23:09] it means that heaven and earth are in the Father's hands for disposal. Elsewhere we read, the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. Here he says, I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou wast hid these things from the wise and prudent. Are you amongst the ranks of the wise and prudent of this world? Or are you feeling in company with your rejected Lord, the scorn of such? Well, take heart.

He says to the Father, thou wast hid these things from the wise and prudent, [00:24:01] and hast revealed them unto babes. Babes, of course, are indicative of a new generation. Babes is indicative of simplicity. The childlike confidence of the new generation is all encompassed by this blessed expression, thou hast revealed them unto babes. Oh, are you a member of the new generation? Are you one of the babes? Oh, well, take heart. Oh, well, take heart. Find courage, find comfort, find refreshment, find cheer in the words of our blessed Lord here. For he says of them that the Father

has revealed these things to the new generation, to the babes. Why? What is there about us that should command such interest and such [00:25:02] revelation? Oh, he says, even so, Father, for it seemed good in my sight. Just think of it.

The Father finds his pleasure in revealing his own deep things relative to himself and his blessed Son to the new generation. He finds his pleasure in bringing into being, securing this new generation and opening out to them the precious things of the Father and the Son. And so, in verse 27, our Lord goes on, all things are delivered unto me of my Father. In verses 20 to 24, he's been speaking of the things that have refused him, [00:26:01] speaking of the things that are withheld from him, things that he had a rightful title to as the Royal Son of David. Refused what is on at the hands of these who are the religious custodians of them. He says, all things are delivered unto me of my Father. I think that's blessed. He doesn't say, the Father here. He says, my Father. Our blessed Lord speaks in the consciousness of a relationship which is so blessedly intimate, of a relationship that no event or circumstance in time can interfere with. He speaks in the consciousness and in the tranquil enjoyment of this relationship that has subsisted from eternity. He says, all things are delivered unto [00:27:06] me of my Father. And no man knoweth his Son but the Father. Oh, he has stooped so low that men have ridiculed him, that men have despised him, esteemed him not, esteemed him stricken of God and afflicted. They've reviled him. They've persecuted him. They've hated him. And eventually, we will learn in the closing scenes of this gospel, they have crucified him. Though they have done so, there's something in this blessed person that lies outside of creature care. No man knoweth his Son but the Father. The devil had taken occasion of his lowly stoop in the grace of incarnation [00:28:02] to seek to tarnish his glory. Men have assailed him. Men have derided him. Men have denied the truth of the glory of his blessed person. The Father has been at infinite pains to guard his glory. And as we learn elsewhere from the fifth chapter of John's gospel, he's committed all judgment unto this blessed person. But all men might honor the Son, even as they honor the Father who has sent him.

So here, no man knoweth his Son. Oh, let us accept the divinely given limits here. There is that in the person of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the divine person, the divine person having become flesh that's beyond us all. [00:29:05] Is it any wonder that there's that about him that we cannot penetrate? Let us not seek to pry into that which is unrevealed. Who can put his finger, so to speak, upon the point of union of deity and humanity in this blessed person? Faith accepts the truth of it, whilst faith cannot explain it. No man knoweth the Son, but the Father. Neither knoweth any man the Father. The Father's outside our reach, except he reveal himself. And unless he reveals himself, he must remain forever unknowable and unknown.

But neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son. And he that hateth the Son [00:30:09] will reveal him. All the Son has revealed the Father. He's come down from heaven to earth to make the Father known. The Son who knows him, dwells in his bosom, knoweth all that in that bosom lies. Come down to earth to make it known that we with him might share his blessed joys. How wonderful. And he that hateth the Son will reveal him. Though the mass might run in the train of the wise and the prudent of this world, turn their backs upon God. Turn their backs upon the Christ of God. The Lord speaks here in such wise that the blessing of the heart of God is made available for the individual. That individual [00:31:07] who believes on the Son. That individual who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he says, he that hateth the Son will reveal him. We are subjects of divine revelation.

The revelation of the Father by the Son. And now in verse 28, he looks out as it were upon what at

that time would be the godly remnant in Israel. Feeling the awful state of things. Feeling the pressure of wholesale departure morally from God. Even though this people with their lips drew near to God. And he says to them, come. Blessed word of invitation. Come. Come on to me. He doesn't say, come on to God. He says, come on to [00:32:09] me. It would be blasphemy. Were he not God manifest in the flesh. Were he not the Son here in the revelation of the Father. To say such a thing. Come on to me. And how wide is his invitation. All ye that labor and are heavy laden. And are they burdened hearts today? Are there those amongst the saints of God who are feeling the awfully deceiving departure from the truth of God? Are there those who mourn in the presence of God? The Lord Jesus says to you, come on to me. All ye that labor and are heavy laden. And I will give you rest. Rest of heart.

[00:33:04] Rest of heart. Just as he gives rest of conscience. Rest in his own blessed company. In the confidence of this that he knows the end from the beginning. And the end is assured. He has spoken already in the calm confidence of the certainty of his own triumph, victory, and supremacy. For has he not said all things are delivered unto me of my Father.

We can be assured of this that truth shall prevail. Righteousness shall be exalted. Every thought of God for his glory shall be brought to blessed fruition. And every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ will shine in the glory with which the Father [00:34:08] has invested the Son of his love. And he would have us to rest in his own blessed company in the certainty and assurance of this blessed knowledge. We can look right on to the end of the pathway with confidence knowing that all that is of God shall stand. And you and I, dear brethren, today, in a day of testing, a day of trial, a day of weakness, a day of declension, a day of increasing departure and failure, you and I, dear brethren, are encouraged by himself to come unto him. He says, take my yoke upon you. The yoke of submission to the Father's will. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.

[00:35:06] Oh, may we learn of him, the one who moved here constantly from the very outset, as he had said. Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business. Let us learn of him in this blessed fashion, the one who ever did those things which were pleasing to the Father. Let us take his yoke. Let us learn of him, the one who had no place here, no room in the inn. Stole in a cattle shed was his. Oh, that may have been so. But the throne and the kingdom await him, given to him by the Father. All things are delivered unto me [00:36:06] of my Father. In his meekness he did not assert his claim.

He to whom the highest glory belonged was lowly, not only meek and lowly in circumstance. He said, I am meek and lowly in heart. And as we learn of him, he says, ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

How blessed then to get into the company of our blessed Lord, the one who has trodden the path of rejection and reproach before us. The one who has ever moved in the confidence [00:37:02] and assurance that everything was in perfect control in the Father's hand. And all things are delivered unto me of my Father. And before he takes his universal throne, before he is seen with the many diadems upon his brow, he exercises himself in revealing the Father and hate to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. And so the Lord would lead your hearts and mine when trial threatens, when disaster looms in the testimony. He would lead us he would lead us into the sweet retreat of his own blessed company. And just as he gave the assuring word to John the Baptist, he gives this assuring word now [00:38:06] for any who feel the pressure of things. May we hear his inviting voice saying to us, Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. And ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Amen.

Here are some words of exhortation and encouragement composed by the late James Boyd.