

Matthew 11:7-15 The Greatness of John the Baptist as Viewed by Jesus Christ

Introduction: In prison John's faith in Jesus was shaken. He sent word to Jesus to inquire if He really is the Christ. Jesus answered John's question and rebuked John for his faltering faith. Now, lest the multitude should lose all confidence in John, Jesus points out John's greatness.

I. No reed shaken in the wind, Verse 7.

- A. The disciples of John were leaving and Jesus addressed the multitudes.
- B. He asked them why they went to hear John preach in the first place? Was it to see a reed shaken in the wind? (A reed is easily turned by the wind. It symbolized a wishy washy person.)
 - 1. The implied answer is that John was no reed shaken in the wind and the people knew it.
 - 2. He had convictions and preached fearlessly against sin. (He even condemned Herod's adultery.)
 - 3. They would not have gone to hear him if he had been without conviction.

II. No softy, Verse 8.

- A. John was no softy—no sissy, no spineless coward. (He was a man and spoke the truth like a man.)
- B. Neither was he spoiled by riches. (He was willing to sacrifice in order to serve God.)
- C. John was in the king's house now—the king's jail house.

III. A prophet, a great prophet, Verses 9-10.

- A. Did they think John was a prophet of God?
- B. Yes, they were convinced that he was a man of God with a message of God. (Even today you will not come to hear a man many times unless you believe he has a message from God.)
- C. Jesus acknowledged John as a prophet, but not just an ordinary prophet.
 - 1. John was that special prophet spoken of in Malachi 3:1 who would prepare the way for the coming Christ.
 - 2. It was an honor for the prophets of old to foretell the coming of Jesus, but a greater honor for John to say, "He is here."

IV. None greater than John, but one, Verse 11.

- A. There was none born of woman greater than John the Baptist, but with one exception.
- B. That one exception is Jesus, the Christ.
 - 1. Jesus was also born of woman. (Not of man.)
 - 2. He being God in human flesh is greater than John.
- C. The word here translated "least" can be translated "after", "later."
 - 1. With this translation what Jesus said is that the one who came after John is greater than John. (John was sent to prepare the way for one who is greater than he.)
 - 2. This is what John himself said, John 1:19-27.

V. An effective ministry, Verse 12.

- A. "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing and forceful men lay hold on it." (New International Version.)
- B. Phillips - "...the kingdom of heaven has been taken by storm and eager men are forcing their way into it."

C. Both under the ministry of John and the ministry of Jesus great numbers had made profession of faith and been baptized.

VI. John's ministry, a turning point, Verse 13.

- A. John was a prophet under Old Testament law.
- B. He was the last of the Old Testament prophets.
- C. He introduced the new era of New Testament ministers.
(Jesus and the apostles were the first.)

VII. A fulfillment of Malachi 4:5, Verses 14-15.

- A. Jesus said that John was the Elijah who would come.
- B. He knew that many would not believe this because they were expecting Elijah to come back to life. (Jesus meant that John was like Elijah.)
- C. Nobody would doubt the greatness of Elijah.

Conclusion:

1. Do not judge a person by his one mistake, but by his over-all good.
(We are apt to ignore a lifetime of good and magnify one mistake.)
2. Do not fret if you are not honored by men.
(The time will come when He will honor His servants.)
3. Others may become great, but there is none like Christ.
(He is worthy of all the praise, honor, and glory.)
4. The kingdom of heaven is well worth pressing into.
(In that day many felt it urgent to have their sins forgiven. It still is.)
5. It is also worth the while of any saved person to be baptized and to actively serve the Lord.
6. Jesus does not want the good name of His servants ruined. (He personally cleared the name of John the Baptist. Let us be careful not to damage the name of one of God's people.)

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