

## Matthew 11a

**Having sent the twelve disciples to minister to the people of Israel, what did Jesus do next (v. 1)?** Jesus departed from there to teach and to preach in the cities of Galilee where the disciples had previously lived.

**What question did John the Baptist send to Jesus from prison (vv. 2-3)?** “Are you really the promised Messiah?” The questioning of Jesus by John points up the misconception that the Jews had in regard to the coming of the Messiah. John had heard of the works of Jesus and they certainly appeared to be Messianic. However, Jesus did not suddenly assert His authority and judge the people as John probably had thought He would (Matthew 3:10-12). Jesus did not quite fit John's ideas of what the Messiah would do. He didn't overthrow the Roman rule and set up a political kingdom He was bringing blessing to many but judgment to none. Because of these misconceptions, John began to doubt.

Perhaps his being in prison, a place which was certainly incongruous for the herald of the King, reinforced his doubts.

**How did Jesus answer (vv. 4-5)?** Jesus did not answer John with a direct yes or no. Instead, He told John's disciples to go back and report to John what they heard and saw taking place. He was performing the miracles predicted of the Messiah. These works would prove that Jesus indeed is the Messiah (Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1).<sup>1</sup>

**What did Jesus mean when he said, “Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me” (v. 6)?** Jesus knew that the focus of His ministry was offensive to the expectation of the Jewish people, who longed for political deliverance from Roman domination. But there was a blessing in store for those who were not offended and did not leave Him.

**How did Jesus address the crowd as John's disciples were leaving (vv. 7-8)?** John had borne witness to Jesus, and now Jesus bore witness to John.

**11:7-8** As soon as John's disciples departed with Jesus' words of reassurance, the Lord turned to the multitudes with words of glowing praise for the Baptist. This same crowd had flocked to the desert when John was preaching there. Why? To see some weak, vacillating reed of a man, shaken by every passing wind of human opinion? Certainly not! John was a fearless preacher, an embodied conscience, who would rather suffer than be silent, and rather die than lie. Had they gone out to see a well-dressed palace courtier, luxuriating in comfort? Certainly not! John was a simple man of God whose austere life was a rebuke to the enormous worldliness of the people.<sup>2</sup>

**11:9-10** Had the people of Israel gone out into the wilderness to hear John because they believed that he was a prophet? Well, yes, John was a prophet—in fact, the greatest of the prophets. The Lord did not imply here that he was greater as to his personal character, eloquence, or persuasiveness; he was greater because of his position as forerunner of the Messiah-King.<sup>3</sup>

**11:10** His position as forerunner is made clear in verse 10; John was the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy (Malachi 3:1)—the messenger who would precede the Lord and prepare the people for His coming. Other Old Testament prophets had prophesied the coming of Christ, but John was the one chosen to announce His actual arrival. It has been well said, “John *opened the way* for Christ and then he got *out of the way* for Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

Under the Old Covenant, every other prophet announced, “The Messiah is coming.” John alone had the privilege of saying, “The Messiah has arrived and let me introduce you to Him. Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets.

**How did Jesus describe John the Baptist (v. 11)?** Jesus called John the Baptist the greatest human being ever.

**How are we, who are least in the kingdom of heaven, greater than John the Baptist?** John belonged to the age of the Old Covenant which was preparatory to Christ. The least New Testament believer has a higher privilege in

Christ as a part of his *bride*, the church, ([Ephesians 5:25-27, 32](#)) than John the Baptist who was only a *friend of the bridegroom* ([John 3:29](#)).

**What did Jesus mean about the kingdom of heaven (vv. 12-13)?** From the opening of John's ministry to his present imprisonment the kingdom of heaven had suffered violence. The religious leaders of Jesus' day (forceful men) were resisting the movement introduced by John, Jesus, and the apostles. Those leaders wanted a kingdom, but not the kind Jesus was offering. So they were resisting the message and attempting to establish their own rule by force.<sup>5</sup>

**What did Jesus mean by, "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John" (v. 13)?** The entire volume from Genesis to Malachi predicted the coming of the Messiah. When John stepped out on the stage of history, his unique role was not just prophecy; it was announcing the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning Christ's First Advent.<sup>6</sup>

**How does Jesus compare John the Baptist with Elijah (v. 14)?** Malachi had predicted that before Messiah's appearance, Elijah would come as a forerunner ([Malachi 4:5-6](#)). John was not Elijah reincarnated—he disclaimed being Elijah in [John 1:21](#). But he went before Christ in the spirit and power of Elijah ([Luke 1:17](#)).<sup>7</sup> John was a "type" of Elijah.

**What did Jesus mean by, "He who has ears, let him hear" (v. 15)?** Not everyone appreciated John the Baptist or understood the deep significance of his ministry. Therefore the Lord added, "*He who has ears, let him hear!*" In other words, pay heed. Don't miss the significance of what you are hearing. If John did indeed fulfill the prophecy concerning Elijah, that means that Jesus would be following soon as the promised Messiah! In thus accrediting John the Baptist, Jesus was reaffirming Christ's claim to be the Messiah. To accept one would lead to acceptance of the other.<sup>8</sup>

**How was Jesus critical of that generation of people (vv. 16-17)?** The generation to whom Jesus was speaking was not interested in accepting either John or Jesus. The Jews who were privileged to see the Advent of their Messiah-King had no relish for Him or His forerunner. Jesus compared them to peevish children sitting in the marketplaces who refused to be satisfied with any overtures. If their friends wanted to pipe so they could dance, they refused. If their friends wanted to play-act a funeral, they refused to lament.<sup>9</sup>

The idea is that those who have a heart to criticize will find something to criticize. Many people wouldn't be pleased with *either* John or Jesus.

**What was the criticism levied on John and Jesus by the people (vv. 18-19)?** They were not satisfied with John the Baptist because he did not eat or drink, or with Jesus who did eat and drink.....but with sinners. They said John had a demon, and they rejected Jesus as a glutton and a drunkard and a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."

Though that generation was not happy with anything, the wisdom of the approach of both John and Jesus would be proved right by the results, namely, that many people would be brought into the kingdom.<sup>10</sup> Jesus was vindicated in both His works and in the lives of His followers. "*Wisdom is proved right by her actions.*"

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<sup>1</sup> Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 43-44.

<sup>2</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1243.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 44.

<sup>6</sup> William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1244.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 44.