

The Kingdom Suffers Violence

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Matthew 11:2–19 (NKJV) “And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples³ 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.’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.”

God has a kingdom. Jesus Christ is its King. Love is its nature. God’s Word is its Law. Christ and His delegated authority is its government. Love and truth are its language. The heart of man is its domain. Believers are its citizens. Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom—that God’s kingdom has come and it is time to break allegiance with Satan and sin and enter the kingdom through faith and obedience to Jesus Christ the King.

The prophets had foretold of the coming kingdom of God. It was not until the ministry of John the Baptist that a transition from *prophecy* to *fulfillment* began to take place. The kingdom message transitioned from “the kingdom is *coming*” to “the kingdom has *come*.”

Jesus the King was about to come on the scene. John the Baptist came as God’s herald to announce the coming of the kingdom: “The kingdom of God is at hand! Prepare a way in the wilderness, a highway for our God!” Jesus said that John was the greatest prophet who had ever lived. John was a bold messenger that could not be shaken. He was a rugged man who lived in the wilderness and wore camel skin and a leather belt. John was a prophet but he was more than a prophet. All other prophets prophesied until John. John, however, stood on the threshold between prophecy foretold and prophecy fulfilled to announce the entrance of Christ. When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He performed signs and wonders as evidence of the kingdom’s presence among them—the blind saw, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the dead were raised, and the poor had the gospel preached to them. It seems that everyone

would have welcomed Christ and His kingdom with joy. However, not everyone was happy. Those in charge of the existing order felt threatened. Leaders of the existing religious and political orders rejected John and his message, subjecting him and his followers to open and severe opposition. John was eventually imprisoned and beheaded.

Those who welcomed and received the message of the kingdom were faced with violent opposition. In fact, Jesus said that those who enter must do so with "force", i.e. complete allegiance and determination in the face of the domestic, religious, political and even demonic opposition they would face. Those who follow Christ today should not be surprised by the ugly and violent reaction of family, friends, governments, and religious orders who oppose Christ and His kingdom. No matter what we say or do to appease them, they will never be satisfied until we recant our faith and cease from our submission to Christ's Lordship.

The reality is that the kingdom of God is at variance with all that this world represents. We will never be able to satisfy the demands of this world without compromising our commitment to Christ. Jesus compared this generation to playful and immature children sitting in the marketplace demanding others to play their games. They say, in effect, "We want you to play 'wedding' with us. When we play a tune, you must dance!" Or else they will say, in effect, "We want you to play 'funeral' with us. When we play a dirge, you must mourn!" Like children they get upset when people do not cooperate with their inconsistent demands. They find fault with both and accept neither. Those in this generation are critics who insist on having things their way or else they will not play. They invent the game and set the rules so that they can be in control of the outcome.

Jesus uses Himself and John as obvious examples. John the Baptist came as an ascetic and isolationist. He denied himself the pleasures of this life and lived separated from the world. Because John would not dance to their music, they accused him of having a demon. Jesus, on the other hand, came associating with "sinners" and sharing in their social affairs. Because those opposed to Him played a dirge and Jesus would not mourn, they accused Him of being a glutton, winebibber, and a companion of sinners. It did not matter what John or Jesus did; the people refused to acknowledge their inconsistent demands, making it impossible for anyone to please them.

Those who choose the kingdom of God must choose to please the Lord rather than men because in the end "wisdom is justified by her children", i.e. the wisdom of our choice is clearly seen in the final outcome. Here is an illustration in point: A father and his young son were on their way to town leading a donkey by a rope. Someone said, "Look! How silly! The man and his son are both walking when one could be riding the donkey!" So the man places his son on the donkey as he walks alongside. Others say, "Look! How dishonorable! The elderly father is walking while his son rides the donkey!" So the man mounts the donkey while his son walks along beside. Another says, "Look! How inconsiderate! What kind of father would make his young son walk while he rides a donkey!" So the man and the boy mount the donkey only to hear others say, "Look! How cruel! That poor donkey must carry the load of two people!" Finally, the man and his son are seen carrying the donkey!

The kingdom of God is among us and continues to suffer violence opposition. Not everyone is willing to submit to its authority or to permit those who are. If you choose to enter, be ready to do so with determination in the face of this violent opposition.

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