

# John's Eulogy

📖 Matthew 11:7-16

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📅 May 13, 2015

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Last time we entered into the third narrative-discourse section of Matthew 11-13. This section continues with the kingdom offer to the nation Israel. As it progresses the kingdom opposition grows and is rejected resulting in the discourse in parables. In 11:1 Matthew began with the words of transition, "When Jesus had finished..." What Jesus had finished was the giving of detailed instructions to His twelve disciples. They went out in pairs and Jesus went out alone. Matthew only traces Jesus' ministry. We may imagine that Jesus departed from the location of the instruction in order to teach and preach in the cities of Israel. In 11:2 we find ourselves in the desert fortress of Machaerus where John was imprisoned. When John heard of the works of Christ he sent word by two of his disciples (cf Lk 7:19). Their question in 11:3 is "Are you the Coming One, or are you merely human and we should look for another." In my opinion John needed reassurance that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The reason is because the kingdom program, as John envisioned it, was not unfolding on his timetable. John expected the Messiah to quickly judge God's enemies and set him free from prison so the kingdom could be restored (Matt 3:1-12). John's view of the Messiah's work was not wrong but the timetable of His work was wrong. Due to the fact that Jesus was not accomplishing the Messiah's work on his timetable he needed reassurance that Jesus was the Messiah. In 11:4 Jesus gives this assurance, "Go and report to John what you hear and see. The blind receive sight 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" Six works of Jesus are listed. Five of the six are physical miracles and one is spiritual preaching of good news. The fact that Jesus was healing the physical and preaching the spiritual in fulfillment of Messianic prophecy of the OT was more than sufficient evidence that He was the Messiah. The fact that He coupled physical healing with spiritual preaching indicates that the way into the kingdom is spiritual, by believing the good news, and the kingdom itself is physical, one in which all physical maladies will be cured. In 11:6, His closing words to John's disciples are a pronouncement of blessing upon the one who was believing in Him and not stumbling over these works.

Tonight, in 11:7 we come to John's eulogy. It is thought that Jesus is perhaps presiding over John's funeral here since his execution was near at hand. Plummer said, "It may almost be called the funeral oration of the Baptist, for not long afterwards Herodias compassed his death"<sup>1</sup> The good words spoken by Jesus about John are the

highest commendation given to anyone in the entire Bible. Abraham had been called the friend of God (2 Chron 20:7; Isa 41:8; Jas 2:23), Moses the servant of YHWH (Num 12:7, 8; Josh 1:2; et. Al.) and David a man after God's own heart (1 Kgs 11:4; 15:3; et. Al). But John is called the one born of women among whom none is greater (Matt 11:11). This commendation alone should assure us that John's seeking reassurance in the prior verses is not to be interpreted by us as grounds for condemnation.

In 11:7 Jesus took the situation of the two disciples coming to Him from John as an opportunity to praise John. The words **as these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds** indicates that they did not stick around to hear these words of wondrous praise for John. It is too bad they did not because the words accomplish what Jesus' baptism by John accomplished. They united John's ministry with Jesus' ministry such that if one believed in John's message he would be right in believing in the One who came after John, that is Jesus. In other words, if they had stayed to listen they would have stopped following John and would have followed Jesus. If the crowds truly understood how great John was and that he was merely the forerunner, they would logically transfer their trust to Jesus. Thus, Jesus' intent seems to be to bring about a situation where the disciples of John disbanded and became His disciples. Unfortunately the disciples of John never disbanded entirely. Today the Mandaeans consider John as the only true Messiah and are opposed to Jesus.

In order to connect John's ministry to His own and show that rejection of John is rejection of His own He begins by asking, **What did you go out into the wilderness to see?** The people had gone out into **the wilderness** region. This is where John was preaching and baptizing (Matt 3:1). A **wilderness** was a desolate area, uncultivated and uninhabited. This **wilderness** area was the Jordan Valley in a region John refers to as "Bethany beyond the Jordan" (John 1:28). Tradition places Bethany beyond the Jordan on the East side of the Jordan just NE of Jericho, near the place of Elijah's ascension. The region is dry and rocky with wadis that funnel into the Jordan. Inhabitants of Jerusalem had traveled several miles out into this **wilderness** area by taking the road to Jericho and then crossing the Jordan. They did so just **to see** John. To make such a journey would require news of great interest reaching those in Jerusalem. At the time the people were tired and frustrated with the hypocritical leadership of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Peculiarly there was a messianic expectation in the air. Could it be that John the Messiah? Or could it be that John was Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah? These questions must have been on their minds when they heard about John and his ministry. The peculiarity of his ministry was sufficient to draw many people out **into** this **wilderness** area in order to find out who he was.

Jesus asks, **What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?** The **reeds** spoken of here were common in the Jordan Valley. When the wind blew the reeds blew. They were not very stable. It was a common site. Jesus uses it as a metaphor for John. Was John one who was blown about by every wind of doctrine? Certainly not. John had one message and he was unswerving in his proclamation, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" If they had wanted to see those who were blown about by every wind of doctrine they could have just stayed in Jerusalem where it was an all too common sight. In verse 8 He asks, **Well**

**then, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing?** The term **soft clothing** refers to fine clothing that was given to those who served in a king's court. This clothing was often effeminate. Is this the kind of man they went out to see? Jesus says, **Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces!** John was in a wilderness not a **king's palace**. Did they go out to see a man dressed for service in a **king's palace**? Certainly not. John was not dressed in fine, effeminate clothing. He was dressed in a garment of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist (Matt 3:4). If they wanted to see a man dressed in fine clothing they could see that in Jerusalem amongst the Sadducees and Pharisees. So what then did they go out to see?

Observe Jesus' method of teaching. He uses rhetorical questions repeatedly. Rhetorical questions lead people to think, they engage the mind. Jesus is trying to get them to think about the uniqueness of John. Just why did they take a difficult journey away from the comforts of Jerusalem into the wilderness? Wasn't there something unique about John? Had they forgotten? Who was this John?

Verse 9, **But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.** It's true that John was **a prophet**. What was a prophet? A prophet was the mouthpiece of God. The OT prophet was God's prosecuting attorney. He brought charges against the nation Israel for violating the Mosaic covenant, warned them of coming judgment and called them to repent and return to God in order to avoid judgment. He did odd things, dressed oddly, was hated by the leadership and hence in constant danger. Who was John then? He was right in line with the OT prophets. He brought charges against the leadership, warned them of coming judgment, called them to repent and return to God in order to avoid the judgment. His ministry was carried on in the wilderness and he dressed strangely. His garments are identical to that of Elijah. Who then was John? He was definitely a prophet; the first prophet in over 400 years. So what did they **go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.**

What does He mean **more than a prophet**? What more could one be than **a prophet**? One could be a king but John was not a king and in fact it was the prophets who appointed the kings. So a prophet was greater than a king in some respects. One could be a priest and John was of the Levitical line and so could have served as a priest but he never took up that mantle. So how then could John be **more than a prophet**? The Greek text demands that by comparison John greatly exceeded a prophet.<sup>2</sup> The only way John could greatly exceed a prophet was by also being the forerunner of the King. Only one **prophet** ever had the added credential of being the forerunner of the King. And so John was **more than a prophet**.

That John was the forerunner is Jesus' assertion in 11:10, **This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.'** This is a quote from Mal 3:1. It is very difficult. Almost unanimously commentators identify the prophecy of Mal 3:1 as being fulfilled in John the Baptist (see my lesson on Mal 2:17-3:5). The commentators reasoning is that in three places in the NT, this reference included, Jesus quotes this verse with reference to John the Baptist. However, the problem with this identification is that while John could have fulfilled this prophecy John did not fulfill this prophecy. The

prophecy says of this messenger that he **WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU**. The Hebrew means he "will remove all hindrances" so that the King can arrive with no opposition. John certainly did come with the purpose of removing all hindrances to the King and if he had removed all hindrances to the King then Israel would have received Jesus and enthroned Him. However, the fact is that John did not remove all hindrances to Jesus. Jesus was greatly opposed. Therefore, as the NT later states, John was not Elijah, though he did come in the power and spirit of Elijah. It must be remembered that Jesus is speaking in the context of the kingdom offer to Israel. This was a genuine offer. If it was a genuine offer then John also could genuinely have been Elijah. As Jesus says explicitly down in verse 14, "And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come." The identification of John as the fulfillment of Mal 3:1 was contingent on Israel's receiving the kingdom offer. Mal 3:1 is a prophecy of Elijah and John would have been Elijah if the nation had received the kingdom. But later we find out that the nation did not receive the kingdom and so John was not Elijah, he only came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

The theological import of this kind of passage on one's view of divine sovereignty and human responsibility is critical. One must not sacrifice the truth that God has a plan and His plan is marching toward completion unhindered. At the same time one must not sacrifice the truth that human responsibility within the plan is a genuine feature by which God brings about His plan. The John/Elijah problem helps resolve the problem of divine sovereignty and human responsibility by showing that each has its respective sphere and neither is true to the exception of the other. It is true that John would have fulfilled the prophecy of Elijah in Mal 3:1 if the nation had received the kingdom but it is also true that they would not receive the kingdom and so John was not Elijah. If this seems difficult to understand it is the place of genuine humility to leave room for incomprehensibility. As the Lord said in Isaiah, "My ways are not your ways..." God is not a human and therefore His cause-effect upon the created order should not be viewed as identical with cause-effect we experience within the created order. He simply has ways of working that are beyond the ability of human beings to encapture. So both divine sovereignty and human responsibility are true.

Jesus can say of John in 11:10, **this is the one about whom it is written** because a genuine offer of the kingdom was on the table! However, because they rejected the kingdom we now know John was not the one and Elijah is still to come! Jesus so teaches after the rejection in Matt 17:11 "Elijah is coming and will restore all things..." and states why Elijah is still coming by saying, "but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished." So then the kingdom was at hand, it was a unique time with a unique possibility from the human point of view. We might say, they went out to see Elijah if they would receive him, because if they would receive him then they would receive the One he pointed to, that is Jesus and then the kingdom would come. But they would not....

In 11:11 Jesus continues to eulogize John with the highest commendation in Scripture, **"Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!** This is high praise

indeed. There is no one in the human race who has been **born of women** who is **greater than John the Baptist**. Greater in what sense? The sense in which John is greater is in privilege. Of all men who were born of women none is greater in privilege than **John the Baptist**. This means it is not the greatest privilege to be a president or a king or a celebrity or an athlete, though many people strive for those positions. It may surprise some that it is not even the greatest privilege to be the birth mother of Jesus as the Roman Catholic Church proclaims. The greatest privilege so far in human history is to be the forerunner of the King. This shows that privilege in God's valuation system is related to closeness and intimacy with the King and His ministry. John was the closest and most intimate with the King and therefore has the greatest privilege of all men born of women. This understanding of privilege explains the next statement in verse 11.

**Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.** This statement is indisputable proof that John was not at that time **in the kingdom of heaven** as many theologians suggest. It is futile to argue that the kingdom of heaven had already come in some new sense that was not heretofore known. If the kingdom had already come then certainly John would have been in it. But John was not in it though he longed for it. However, when the kingdom does come, **the one who is least in the kingdom...is greater than** the forerunner of the kingdom. This is because every person in the kingdom will enjoy a greater closeness and intimacy with the King than John the forerunner had with Him before the kingdom. The expression **least in the kingdom** refers to the one with the least rewards in the kingdom. If the one with least rewards in the kingdom will have a greater privilege than John then the kingdom must be a wonderful place. Certainly if the least will be in the kingdom then no one will be excluded from the kingdom. Those who hold to some form of millennial exclusion will need to deal carefully with texts such as these that place the least in the kingdom and not outside.

In 11:12 we find a difficult statement, but not if we've been following the argument. **From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.** There are two words that make this statement difficult. The first is **suffers violence**. The Greek verb *βιάζω* is used only here and in Luke 16:16. It means "to use force." It may be taken as middle or passive voice and one's decision will affect his understanding. If **suffers violence** is a middle voice then Jesus is saying that the kingdom of heaven was forcing its way into history despite opposition to it. This would mean that the kingdom was coming regardless of Israel's response. This is contrary to the truth that Israel must accept the kingdom for the kingdom to come. If **suffers violence** is a passive voice then the kingdom of heaven was being forcefully opposed. This makes more sense in the context. The kingdom of heaven was being forcefully opposed, especially by the leadership. This had been occurring **from the days of John**. The evidence was that John was now in prison. The second word is **take by force**. The Greek verb *αρπάζω* is the word from which we get the concept of the "rapture." The word means "a violent seizing or snatching away, carrying off, dragging away, or taking away." Violent men were doing this. It seems that Jesus is saying that the leadership were taking the kingdom away from the people by their opposition to it. Again we see the importance of the leadership's response to the kingdom offer. Toussaint says, "By their opposition to it they snatched it from the people. The imprisonment of John was a cold and factual

testimony to their rejection of his message, the same one proclaimed by the King and His evangelists."<sup>3</sup> So it seems that 11:12 is saying that "From the days John the Baptist began to preach until now the kingdom of heaven had been forcefully opposed, and the violent leadership were taking the kingdom away from the people by their opposition to it."

11:13 explains further, **For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.** The whole OT looked forward to the time when the King would come. Now the King had come. Had they not paid attention to the OT Scriptures? Why were they opposing the King and His forerunner if they were prophesied by the whole OT?

11:14 **And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.** This states the contingency of John being Elijah. What they had to be **willing to accept** was verse 13, **all the prophets and the Law...until John.** If they were willing to accept **all** that **the prophets and the Law prophesied until John** then John himself would be **Elijah** because the prophets and the Law predicted **Elijah** would **come**. This points up the fundamental problem and the question so many people ask. Why didn't they accept Jesus as their King? The fundamental reason given here is because they did not believe all the prophets and the Law. In other words, they did not believe the OT Scriptures. Jesus stated this truth in a number of ways, In John 5:46 He stated, "If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, because he wrote about Me." The fundamental problem was they did not believe the Scriptures. Had they believed the Scriptures they would have believed Him. The scribes and Pharisees had created a religious system that added to, changed and subtracted from the intent of the Scriptures. It was a misinterpretation of the Scripture. To misinterpret Scripture is to not believe the Scripture. This was the fundamental problem and reason they did not accept Jesus as the King. In Luke 16:31 Jesus said, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead." One could literally rise from the dead right before someone's eyes but if they reject the Scriptures then they will reinterpret the resurrection in terms of their unbelief. Belief in the Scriptures is the absolute precondition for interpreting evidence correctly. Rejection of the Scriptures will always lead to a wrong interpretation of evidence. Finally, in Luke 24 on the Emmaus Road, two men were discussing all the things that had happened during passion week and the rumor that had spread that He was no longer in the tomb, yet they were not believing. It says Jesus came and walked with them but "their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him." Why were they prevented from recognizing Him? Because they did not believe the Scriptures about resurrection. And so Jesus says, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" Then what did Jesus do? He went back to Scripture! "And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." It was lack of faith that prevented their spiritual sight. The only way to restore their spiritual sight was to give them Scripture. You don't think Jesus just healed physical sight as an end do you? He healed physical sight by His word as a means of showing that He could also heal spiritual sight by His word. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Scripture is the ultimate authority and more trustable than experience. If they were willing to accept the Scriptures as ultimate then John would be Elijah who the Scriptures prophesied **to come**.

This is always the problem; lack of faith. If one starts out in a position of rejecting the Scriptures then they will necessarily interpret the evidence incorrectly. Once one leaves the Scripture they are left to their own carnal imagination.

The problem was not John or Jesus and what they said or did, the problem was the people had rejected the Scriptures and were prevented from interpreting John and Jesus correctly. So in 11:15 He says, "**He who has ears to hear, let him hear.** Hear what? **Hear** the Scriptures. The one **who has ears to hear** is the one who is open to hearing the Scriptures. Jesus was speaking to a crowd (11:7). In a crowd there are always those who are open to hearing the Scriptures and those who are closed. You may see people come in and out of these doors. If you see people go out these doors, fundamentally the problem is that something has taken precedence over Scripture. Either their personal animosity toward someone or their agenda is not our agenda or they're in rebellion against the word of God, something has taken precedence over Scripture such that now they're not willing to hear Scripture. They do not have **ears to hear**. But there are always some, very few relatively speaking, who have ears to hear, who are open to hearing the Scriptures and for those in the crowd Jesus commands them to **hear** the Scriptures. It all starts with being open to hearing the Scriptures. Once one is open to hearing the Scriptures and hears the Scriptures then they are able to interpret John and Jesus correctly.

The expression **He who has ears to hear, let him hear** or some variant is used numerous times, particularly in the NT in the letters to the seven churches in Rev 2-3. It is a call to be open to hearing the Scripture so that upon hearing the Scripture they can believe the Scripture. Only if they had ears to hear would they be open to believing that John was the forerunner and Jesus was the King. Believing this was and remains necessary to the kingdom's arrival.

**But, verse 16, to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children, 17and say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'** In other words, what is this saying? Here we have little children sitting around the market place because mommy is doing a little shopping and the kids wanted something to do so they played games with each other. These were "marriage and funeral games." When they played the marriage game the kids would play the flute and what was the appropriate response to the flute? The appropriate response was to **dance**. Marriage is a time of joy and so when you hear the marriage music you **dance**. But they didn't **dance**; they didn't have the appropriate response. Now this is one of my main points about instruments. Certain instruments played in certain ways demand an appropriate response. A flute played at a wedding is a joyful type of instrument that demands a certain response. The way one plays an instrument is not neutral. You hear all the time, "It doesn't matter what instruments are used in worship or how they are used, it's only the words that matter." I beg to differ on many levels. Most instruments can be played in an appropriate way for worshipping God, though some are highly questionable or borderline because of the parameters of the instrument. I think Jesus is making a connection between an instrument and the way it is played with an appropriate response right

here. Jesus, in other words, was not as naïve as most of the modern Church who thinks we can bring the instruments of drugs, sex and alcohol and play them the same way in the Church in order to worship God. That is, to put it lightly, stupid, and it's probably willful ignorance because they have placed their musical preferences above worshipping God. To me you no more play drums and electric guitars and scream into a mic to worship God than you would do at a funeral. It's simply not appropriate for the situation. Here we see the children playing the flute in a marriage game and the appropriate response would be to dance but the other children **did not dance**. It was an inappropriate response.

Giving up on that approach the children turned to a funeral game singing **a dirge**. The **dirge** has a certain meter to it, it's very somber and accommodates lamenting. The Book of Lamentations is a dirge and it is chanted by those who have memorized it in the Hebrew. It's not joyful. And this shows you that there are certain kinds of music that are appropriate for certain situations. You don't play a light, joyful melody at a funeral. It's just not appropriate. There is proper music for every situation. It is not neutral. So again, we see the children singing **a dirge** in the funeral game and the appropriate response was **mourn** and yet they **did not mourn**. What's the point? That generation had an inappropriate response.

Now Jesus explains in verses 18-19. In other words, that was a metaphor and now He's going to apply the metaphor to the nation Israel's response to John the Baptizer and Himself. First, to John in verse 18. **For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!'** Now is that the appropriate response to someone who is sober? You might interpret a person who is a glutton and a drunk as having **a demon** but you'd be off your rocker to interpret someone who came neither eating nor drinking as having **a demon**. What's the point? The nation's response to John was inappropriate. John came like the prophets of old; in the wilderness, wearing garments of camel's hair, a leather belt, eating locusts and honey and preaching a message of repentance in order to avoid judgment, and heralding the way of the King. They interpreted John the wrong way. Why did they interpret John the wrong way? Because they didn't believe the Scriptures! Back to verse 13, "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John." If they had believed all the prophets and the Law until John they would have responded to John appropriately! But as it was they didn't believe the prophets and the Law and so they responded to John inappropriately.

Second, to Jesus in verse 19. **The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'** Now is that an appropriate interpretation. Someone who eats and drinks may be a **glutton and a drunk** but not necessarily. Many people eat and drink in moderation. Jesus was one of them. The title Son of Man is His kingly title from Dan 7:13. A king will want to eat and drink with all those in his kingdom, whether they are rich or poor, tax collectors, righteous or sinners. He will want to remain in touch with the issues that all citizens in his kingdom face. That is what Jesus was doing. His actions were appropriate as a king. It was therefore not appropriate to automatically interpret Him as a **glutton and a drunk**. What was their problem? Why had they interpreted Jesus incorrectly? Because they didn't believe



the Scriptures! Walvoord says, "Unbelief can always find excuses and can justify criticism of servants of God."<sup>4</sup> Unbelief was their basic problem. If they had known the Scriptures they would have known Jesus. But they did not know the Scriptures and therefore they did not know Jesus.

Despite their failure to recognize John and Jesus as the fulfillment of Scripture, Jesus concludes with the proverb, **Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.** John and Jesus are both personified as **wisdom** in how they approached the nation. John, like a wise prophet, abstained from eating and drinking in order to reach the people with the important message of the King and coming judgment. Jesus, like a wise King, ate and drank with every class of citizen in order to understand their needs and concerns. God would render both John and Jesus a favorable verdict. Their wisdom in approaching the nation as a wise prophet and King were declared by their actions. Those who rejected them would be setting themselves for judgment as the next pericope indicates.

In conclusion, in 11:7, as John's two disciples were going away, Jesus made use of the occasion to preside over John's funeral before the crowds. What had they gone out into the wilderness to see? Was John a reed so easily shaken by the wind as is commonly seen in the Jordan Valley? What then had they gone out to see? A man fitted in fine, effeminate clothing fit to stand in a king's court? No. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, John was a prophet and one who was more than a prophet, he was the forerunner of the king. As the Scriptures prophesied in Mal 3:1, "I wend My messenger ahead of You, Who will remove all hindrances before You." This John was Elijah, if that generation would accept the Scripture. In 11:11 Jesus says that among those born of women there has never arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist; not Abraham, not Moses, not David, not even Mary. John was greater in privilege because of his closeness and intimacy with the King as His forerunner. And yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater in privilege than John because of his closeness to the Messiah in His kingdom. In 11:12, from the days of John the Baptist until that time, the kingdom of heaven was being forcefully opposed, and the violent leadership were snatching it away from the people. The explanation given in 11:13 is that they did not believe all the prophets and the Law which prophesied until John. If they had believed the Scriptures they would have received John and Jesus. 11:14 indicates there was still time, "And if you are willing to accept" the Scriptures then "John himself is Elijah who is going to come." In 11:15 the one who is open to hear Scripture, let him hear the Scripture and become convinced of the message of John and Jesus. In 11:16 He charges that generation with spiritual immaturity, likening them to children sitting in the market playing marriage and funeral games, children calling out to other children and saying, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' That generation did not respond appropriately to either John or Jesus. In 11:18, "John" came neither eating nor drinking, just like a prophet of old, and they said, "He has a demon!" In 11:19, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners," like a wise king wanting to stay in touch with the needs of all his citizens. And yet that generation was not responding appropriately. Yet wisdom personified as John and Jesus is rendered a favorable verdict from God by their appropriate deeds.

By application what can we learn? The most important lesson of the section is to believe all of the Scripture. When we don't believe the Scripture we are like that generation that cannot interpret the evidence around us appropriately. If John and Jesus were to enter our church today and speak, would we accept them? Would we interpret their actions as befitting them? Many churches today would not accept them. They would violently oppose them. While this may seem incredible it happened in the 1<sup>st</sup> century to that generation of Israel who followed the religious system of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus said in Luke 19:44, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." It is dangerous not to believe the Scriptures. Because that generation of Israel did not believe the Scriptures God sent the Roman army in AD70 to raze Jerusalem to the ground and to destroy them and their children within them. It is vital to believe the Scriptures. That is the only way to know God and yourself as God knows you.

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<sup>1</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Mt 11:7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Matt 11:9.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 152.

<sup>4</sup> John Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p 83.