

John the Baptist – Study Leader’s Questions – Matthew 11:7-19

What did you expect, Matthew 11:7-13

1. *When speaking of John, why does Jesus talk about reeds and finely dressed men (Matthew 11:7-8)?*
2. *Jesus said that John was **more** than a prophet. What did he mean by that (Matthew 11:9)?*
3. *Given the ministry of John how can anyone be greater than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11)?*
4. *How is the Kingdom of heaven taken by violence or subjected to violence (Matthew 11:12)?*

John is Elijah, Matthew 11:14-15

5. *In what sense was John ‘Elijah’ (Matthew 11:14, Luke 1:17)? What does that mean?*
6. *Since John is the messenger that would announce the great day of the Lord (Malachi 3:1), what does that mean for Jesus (Malachi 4:5)?*

Spoilt Children, Matthew 11:16-19

7. *Why does Jesus compare the people of His day to children (Matthew 11:16)?*
8. *Why did people criticise and reject John’s ministry (Matthew 11:18)?*
9. *Why did people criticise and reject Jesus’ ministry (Matthew 11:19)?*
10. *What was found in both the ministry of John and Jesus (Matthew 11:19)?*

What did you expect, Matthew 11:7-13

1. When speaking of John, why does Jesus talk about reeds and finely dressed men (Matthew 11:7-8)?

He was contrasting John with “*false prophets*” Matthew 7:15 to show that John was “*a prophet of the LORD*” 1 Kings 18:22, 22:7, 8 like Elijah himself and like “yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD:”

John, like Elijah and Micaiah in their prophetic ministries, was in a minority of one (though one with God can become a majority¹.)

“Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel’s table...Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men” 1 Kings 18:19, 22.

1 Kings 18:19 show that these prophets of the groves lodged in the king’s palace, where the king and queen, Ahab and Jezebel, resided. It was the king’s house, as in Matthew 11:8.

“And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house; and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money” 1 Kings 21:1-2.

Being “*the prophets of the groves*” they were pliable like a sapling, fearful “*as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind*” Isaiah 7:2 and “*wavering*” as James 1:6 describes. “***But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.***”

They were four hundred yes-men and not like Micaiah.

“And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramothgilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the king’s hand. And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak” 1 Kings 22:12-14.

After winding up Ahab, 1 Kings 22:15, Micaiah spoke “***nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD***” 1 Kings 22:16. See 1 Kings 22:17-38.

So did John, of whom the Lord Jesus Christ said in John 5:33 “***Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth,***” for the same reason as Micaiah.

“Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;” Luke 3:2-3.

The people then went “***out into the wilderness***” Matthew 11:7 to hear “*the word of God*” from John.

“Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins” Matthew 3:5-6.

The above suggests that anyone who really wants to hear “*the word of God*” isn’t worried about any inconvenience that may be encountered in so-doing e.g. “*the queen of Sheba*” 1 Kings 10:1, Matthew 12:42.

“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”

2. Jesus said that John was *more than a prophet*. What did he mean by that (Matthew 11:9)?

In addition to preparing the way for the Lord Jesus Christ as ***“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness”*** in fulfilment of Isaiah 40:3, in accordance with Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4, John 1:23, John was ***“more than a prophet”*** because he was in effect *two* prophets, Elijah and himself. Note Malachi 4:5 and the Lord’s statement about John in Matthew 11:14.

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:”

“And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.”

See also Matthew 17:11, 12, 13, Mark 9:11, 12, 13, Luke 1:17.

John had his own ministry as Mark 1:4 shows.

“John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

See also Acts 19:4, with respect to John’s baptism aimed at specifically pointing individuals to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”

In addition, John could, and in part did, carry out the ministry of Elijah, which was closely related to but distinct from John’s main ministry, such that neither baptism nor the preaching of baptism is explicitly mentioned. See Malachi 4:6, Luke 1:17.

“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 he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Observe John’s exhortations to charitable conduct or turning of hearts to help each other out unstintingly with food and clothing, as distinct from preaching the baptism of repentance, which match James’ exhortation to the same effect for the End Times, with Elijah in the near context.

“And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise” Luke 3:10-11.

“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” James 5:9.

“Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit” James 5:17-18.

John’s and James’ exhortation refer to levels of desperation in times of famine both historically and in the future. See Lamentations 4:10, also 2 Kings 6:25-31, Revelation 6:5, 6.

“The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.”

Elijah’s ministry historically included preventing rainfall and making *fire* come down from heaven instead.

“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” 1 Kings 17:1.

“And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty” 2 Kings 1:10.

Elijah, with Moses, Malachi 4:4, will have a similar ministry in the End Times.

“And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will” Revelation 11:5-6.

As **“Elias, which was for to come”** Matthew 11:14, John could have carried out a similar ministry because at the time of the events of Matthew 11, the First Advent *could have become the Second Advent*, if the Jews had received their Messiah².

For such a dual ministry, John was also **“more than a prophet”** Matthew 11:9 because he would have needed **“a double portion”** of Elijah’s spirit, such as Elisha asked for and received.

“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” 2 Kings 2:9. See 2 Kings 2:10, 11.

3. Given the ministry of John how can anyone be greater than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11)?

They will be greater than John the Baptist because they will dwell in a *revealed “kingdom of heaven”* Matthew 11:11, with a full revelation of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 1:4, that John did not have, **“for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”** Isaiah 11:9.

See also Habakkuk 2:14.

“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

Moreover, **“he that is least in the kingdom of heaven”** will be greater than John because the law will be written in his heart by God, which He is not said to have done for John, though John knew the scripture and how it applied to him, Isaiah 40:3, John 1:23.

“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” Jeremiah 31:34.

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” Hebrews 8:10³.

Note that Jeremiah 31:34, Matthew 11:11, Hebrews 8:10 apply specifically to *the nation of Israel* with respect to **“the kingdom of heaven.”** The expression **“the kingdom of heaven”** occurs 33 times in scripture, *only in the Book of Matthew*.

The equivalent passage for *Gentiles or Jews as individuals* is Luke 7:28 with respect to **“the kingdom of God.”**

“For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

An individual Jew or Gentile may have the new birth John 3:3, 5 that John never had and is therefore greater than John.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

The expression ***“the kingdom of God”*** occurs in each of the four Gospels a total of 55 times (and a total of 70 times in scripture, 7 times in the Book of Acts and the remaining 8 occurrences in the Pauline Epistles), because both kingdoms are present with the Lord Jesus Christ at the First Advent *and they will be at the Second Advent*. The Lord Jesus Christ is King of *both* kingdoms because He is ***“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS”*** Revelation 19:16.

See Dr Ruckman’s comments⁴ with respect to Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:15. Note the explicit reference to the Gospel in Mark 1:15, which is not explicitly mentioned in Matthew 4:17.

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

“And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

For now, the Gospel is that ***“the kingdom of God”*** is entered by the new birth, John 3:3, 5, which is a *spiritual* birth because ***“God is a Spirit”*** John 4:24. It is a *spiritual* kingdom.

The new birth is *never* connected with ***“the kingdom of heaven.”***

Moreover it is *never* said in scripture that ***“the kingdom of God”*** ***“suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force”*** Matthew 11:12 and it is *never* said in scripture that ***“the kingdom of heaven”*** ***“is within you”*** Luke 17:21. See *Matthew 11 AV1611 and Changing NIVs* pp 11-14 of this work.

The reason is that ***“the kingdom of heaven”*** is a physical kingdom because God *created* heaven and all that is in it.

“And swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer” Revelation 10:6.

By contrast, God did not ‘create’ God.

Note also that heaven includes a place where physical creatures fly.

“And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven” Genesis 1:20.

Fowl do not ‘fly’ in God.

Note also that *three* heavens exist.

“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven” 2 Corinthians 12:2.

Although manifest in three Persons, 1 John 5:7, *one* God exists, not three.

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”

See Dr Ruckman’s works for more details⁵.

4. *How is the Kingdom of heaven taken by violence or subjected to violence (Matthew 11:12)?*

Dr Ruckman has the most useful summary answer⁶.

He states that ***“the kingdom of heaven”*** was taken ***“by force”*** Matthew 11:12 from the Jews when Nebuchadnezzar took their throne and crown in 587 B.C. and the remnant of their nation into captivity.

“The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!” Lamentations 5:16.

Dr Ruckman states that ***“the times of the Gentiles”*** Luke 21:24 began with the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and continue to the present, with ***“the kingdom of heaven”*** being repeatedly subjected to violence and force by the wars of the Caesars, the popes, Charlemagne, Hitler, Lincoln, FDR, JFK et al.

The phrase ***“the days of John the Baptist”*** in Matthew 11:12 refers to the historical sweep of the Old Testament, with John, in a sense, via his association with Elijah, being the last of the Old Testament prophets, Malachi 4:5, 6, Matthew 11:14.

Note also Matthew 11:13, taking in the span of the Old Testament times that ended with John.

“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.”

Note finally that Matthew 4:17, 5:3, 10, 19, 20, 7:21, 8:11, 11:11, 12 show that ***“the kingdom of heaven”*** is a kingdom of men.

A description of the operation of ***“the kingdom of heaven,”*** therefore, when God overrules ***“the prince of this world”*** John 12:31, 14:30, see also Luke 4:6, 2 Corinthians 4:4, is found in Daniel 4:17.

“This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.”

John is Elijah, Matthew 11:14-15

5. *In what sense was John ‘Elijah’ (Matthew 11:14, Luke 1:17)? What does that mean?*

Even though ***“John did no miracle”*** John 10:41, he went forth ***“in the spirit and power of Elias”*** Luke 1:17, *in that he could have done what Elijah did* if the Jews had accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah, Daniel 9:25, 26, John 1:41, 4:25 and the First Advent had become the Second, *as Elijah will do in the End Times.*

See *Question 2* and remarks on 1 Kings 17:1, 2 Kings 1:10 and Revelation 11:5-6.

“And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.”

6. *Since John is the messenger that would announce the great day of the Lord (Malachi 3:1), what does that mean for Jesus (Malachi 4:5)?*

It means that when the Lord Jesus Christ said ***“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate”*** Matthew 23:38 and the Jews said ***“We have no king but Caesar”*** John 19:15 after finally rejecting their Messiah at the First Advent, Daniel 9:26, ***“the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD”*** is postponed 2,000 years and the Lord Jesus Christ will bring in that day at the Second Advent, according to 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

“...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and

from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Peter's admonition in 2 Peter 3:11-12 should be faithfully obeyed, therefore⁷.

"...what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God..."

Spoilt Children, Matthew 11:16-19

7. *Why does Jesus compare the people of His day to children (Matthew 11:16)?*

They were put out because John and Jesus wouldn't join their 'gang' and be like them. John never **"danced"** Matthew 11:17 in his preaching in order to be one of the crowd and receive **"the praise of men more than the praise of God"** John 12:43 (and John *did* receive **"the praise of God"** - see Matthew 11:7-11).

John was quite the opposite.

"Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Luke 3:7.

The Lord Jesus Christ never **"lamented"** in His ministry of discipleship, not even for the bereaved.

"And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" Luke 9:59-60.

8. *Why did people criticise and reject John's ministry (Matthew 11:18)?*

Stephen explains why.

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" Acts 7:51-53.

9. *Why did people criticise and reject Jesus' ministry (Matthew 11:19)?*

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"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" Acts 7:51-53.

10. *What was found in both the ministry of John and Jesus (Matthew 11:19)?*

Wisdom, indeed **"the wisdom of God"** Luke 11:49.

Note that both John and the Lord Jesus Christ were prophets, Matthew 11:9, Luke 13:33 and the Lord Jesus Christ is **"the Apostle and High Priest of our profession"** Hebrews 3:1. Moreover, He **"of God is made unto us wisdom"** 1 Corinthians 1:30.

"Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:" Matthew 23:28.

"Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;" Luke 11:49-50.

Note Luke 1:17, 2:40 with respect to John's wisdom.

“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.”

Note Matthew 12:42, 13:54, Luke 2:52 with respect to the wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here” Luke 12:42.

“And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?”

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

Summary

John was rough-hewn and ***“plentifully declared the thing as it is”*** Job 26:3.

Jesus was refined and ***“plentifully declared the thing as it is”*** Job 26:3.

Most turned away. A few did not.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” Matthew 7:13-14.

“By the grace of God” 1 Corinthians 15:10, always seek to have ***“plentifully declared the thing as it is”*** Job 26:3.

Additional Notes on Aspects of the Mustard Seed, the Kingdom and Matthew 11:12

The Mustard Seed

The mustard seed is mentioned 5 times in scripture; Matthew 13:31, 17:20, Mark 4:31, Luke 13:19, 17:6.

In Matthew 17:20, Luke 17:6, it is likened to faith that is in God that overcomes obstacles. Matthew 17:20, Luke 17:6, however, have nothing to do with supposedly spreading a kingdom of God's people by folk getting saved and doing evangelism.

By contrast, Matthew 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32, Luke 13:18-19 are all evil associations of the mustard seed. It is interesting that both the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are mentioned in those verses.

Faith is active again but it's the wrong kind of faith, in that it is faith in the final antichrist i.e. the Devil incarnate, Revelation 13:4.

The tree depicted in Matthew 13:32, Mark 4:32, Luke 13:19 is the antichrist and his kingdom, which becomes worldwide, and is foreshadowed in history by the Assyrian (which would include Sennacherib, 2 Kings 19), Ezekiel 31:1-31.

Note in Ezekiel 31:31, the Assyrian becomes Pharaoh, Exodus 1:8, Isaiah 52:4, indicating, in effect, that these world rulers are types of the Devil, ***“the prince of this world”*** John 12:31, 14:30⁸.

The tree of Matthew 13:32, Mark 4:32, Luke 13:19 is also Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian kingdom of Daniel 4:10-12, another type of the Devil incarnate, the final antichrist.

These types point to the final world kingdom of the beast, Revelation 13:2 with Luke 4:6, whose kingdom is centred on the Catholic Church, Revelation 17:1-5, which is ***“the habitation of devils”*** Revelation 18:2 with Matthew 13:32 and ***“the birds of the air.”*** See Ephesians 2:2 and ***“the prince of the power of the air.”***

The Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God

The following notes should be read with the accompanying study *Questions 3, 4*.

Devils are evil spirits, Matthew 8:16, Luke 8:2. Bizarre as it sounds, they are in the kingdom of God, because it is a *spiritual* kingdom. See 1 Kings 22:19-23, 2 Chronicles 18:18-22 for an account of how this works, overlapping with a physical kingdom i.e. the kingdom of heaven or part thereof. The Catholic Church is a visible, physical kingdom and as such, a manifestation of part of the visible, physical kingdom of heaven.

It follows that the Catholic Church is under the wrong king, ***“a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns”*** Revelation 17:3, ***“the great dragon...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan”*** Revelation 12:9.

This church will have *the Devil incarnate* at its head in ***“the time of the end”*** Daniel 8:17, 11:35, 40, 12:4, 9 ***“the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority”*** Revelation 13:2, who ***“shall ascend out of the bottomless pit”*** Revelation 17:8. He will rule the world for ***“forty and two months”*** Revelation 13:5, having been given the kingship of ***“the kingdom of heaven”*** on earth until the Second Advent.

The Lord Jesus Christ will put down the beast and his rulership at the Second Advent, Revelation 19⁹.

Yet the Catholic Church is ***“the habitation of devils,”*** which, being spirits, are in the kingdom of God.

That is why the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are both mentioned in Matthew 13:31, Mark 4:30-31, Luke 13:18-19. Those verses have nothing to do with any kingdom advancing forci-

bly by aggressive evangelism, which is sheer amillennial or postmillennial fiction. Paul's term for his pre-conversion "*all things*" Philippians 3:8 is apt here.

Without delving too deeply, Matthew 8:12 underlies the distinction between the two kingdoms.

"But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

"*The kingdom*" in Matthew 8:12 cannot be "*the kingdom of God*" for any individual *who enters it by the new birth, insofar as "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* John 3:3, 5 because that individual is then identified by Ephesians 5:30 "*For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.*" He therefore cannot "*be cast into outer darkness*" and is a child of the kingdom of God, being one of "*the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*" Galatians 3:26 "*for of such is the kingdom of God*" Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16 and is "*sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*" Ephesians 1:13.

"*The kingdom*" of Matthew 8:12 *therefore cannot be "the kingdom of God."* It is in fact "*the kingdom of heaven.*"

"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" Matthew 8:11.

Observe the careful wording in the parallel passage in Luke 13:28, *with no reference to any "children of the kingdom."*

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

Apparently one theory, totally unsubstantiated in any way, why the expression "*the kingdom of heaven*" occurs only in the Book of Matthew is that the Jews to whom he was writing may have been offended by the expression "*the kingdom of God.*" However, this expression occurs 5 times in Matthew; Matthew 6:33, 12:28, 19:24, 21:31, 43.

See Dr Ruckman's work¹⁰ on the parables of Matthew 13 and on Matthew 11:12, 13:31, 32.

See also Dr Ruckman's detailed study on the kingdom of heaven versus the kingdom of God¹¹.

In addition, Dr Douglas Stauffer¹² has an excellent summary on the kingdom of heaven versus the kingdom of God as a physical, visible kingdom versus a spiritual kingdom, with *both* kingdoms being present with the Lord Jesus Christ at the Second Advent, Isaiah 2:1-4.

Further Dr David E. Walker¹³ has an excellent study on the kingdoms of heaven and of God. Dr Walker notes that:

- the kingdom of heaven is a physical, visible kingdom on earth, Matthew 5:19, 8:12, 13:3, 19:14
- the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom entered by the new birth, John 3:3, 5, Romans 14:17
- the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are each "*at hand*" when the Lord Jesus Christ "*the great king*" Matthew 5:3, 35, Luke 6:20 is present on earth.

In sum, though they *meet* in the Lord Jesus Christ because "***All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth***" Matthew 28:18 the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are *not* the same. Paul's admonition should therefore always be kept in mind *and applied*.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" 2 Timothy 2:15.

Matthew 11 AV1611 and Changing NIVs

Matthew 11:12

“suffereth violence” AV1611s

“forcefully advancing,” “subjected to violence” 1984, 2011 NIVs

Introduction

Compare these readings:

“And from the dayes of Iohn the Baptist, vntill now, the kingdome of heauen suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” Matthew 11:12 1611 AV1611.

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” Matthew 11:12 2011+ AV1611.

“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it” Matthew 11:12 1984 NIV.

“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it” Matthew 11:12 2011 NIV.

By inspection, the 1611, 2011+ AV1611s and 1984 NIV readings given above for Matthew 11:12 are distinctly different for the expressions **“suffereth violence”** and *“forcefully advancing”* respectively.

Both *cannot* be **“the word of God”** therefore and one reading must be rejected as *not* scripture but merely **“the word of men”** 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Moreover, the 1984, 2011 NIV Editions clearly contradict each other for the expressions *“forcefully advancing”* and *“subjected to violence”* respectively. One reading must therefore be rejected as wrong.

A comparison of versions has been carried out to determine which of the conflicting readings has the stronger witness among available versions.

35 pre and post-1611 versions have been compared with the 1611, 2011+ AV1611s and the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12. This number is not exhaustive but the versions included in the comparison are believed to be the better-known ones.

The versions used for the comparison are as follows. See **References** for the sites used for:

1385, 1395 Wycliffe and 16th century Bibles; Tyndale, Coverdale, Matthew, Great, Geneva, Bishops', 1611 AV1611, 2011+ AV1611¹⁴, 1539 Taverner Bible¹⁵

JR = Jesuit Rheims 1582 NT¹⁶

DRs = Catholic Douay-Rheims Versions; 1610 Edition, Challoner's Revision 1749-1752¹⁷

RV, ASV, NASV, ESV = English Revised Version, American Standard Version, New American Standard Version, English Standard Version¹⁸

NIVs = 1973¹⁹, 1984, 2011 New International Version Editions²⁰, 1996, 2007 New International Version Gideons Editions²¹

TNIV = 2005 Today's New International Version²²

NKJV = New King James Version²³

NKJV f.n. = New King James Version footnote

RSV, NRSV, CEV, HCSB, NCV, NLT = Revised Standard Version, New Revision Standard Version, Contemporary English Version, Holman Christian Standard Bible, New Century Version, New Living Translation²⁴

JB, NJB = Catholic Jerusalem, New Jerusalem Bibles²⁵

NWTs = Jehovah's Witness Watchtower 1984, 2013 New World Translations²⁶

Ne = Nestle's 21st Edition Greek-English Interlinear New Testament²⁷. Nestle is largely the underlying Greek New Testament Text for the 20th century cut-outs i.e. ESV, NIVs, NKJV f.n.s, JB, NJB, NWTs etc. and most critics use Nestle to attack the AV1611. However Nestle's text is based on a small number of heavily corrupted Greek manuscripts and not fit for purpose as Dr Gipp and Sister Riplinger have shown²⁸

Berry = George Ricker Berry's Interlinear Edition of Stephanus' 1550 Edition of the Received Greek New Testament Text²⁹

M = Farstad-Hodges 'Majority' Text³⁰. It isn't a majority Greek New Testament text³¹ but it is nevertheless a well-known Greek witness to the New Testament. It agrees largely with the NKJV.

Results of the Comparison #1 – Agreement with the 1611, 2011+ AV1611s in Matthew 11:12

All 9 Pre-1611 Bibles

1385, 1395 Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, Taverner ("*is intruded*"), Matthew, Great, Bishops', Geneva

Those are all bibles associated with the 16th century English Protestant Reformation or the lead-up to it i.e. Wycliffe.

All 5 Catholic Bibles

JR DRs, JB, NJB

Note that Matthew 11:12 notwithstanding, Rome uses Matthew 16:18 to spread the kingdom by force³².

9 Non-NIV Post-1611 Versions

RV, ASV, NASV, ESV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV, CEV, HCSB

All 3 Greek-English Interlinears

Ne, Berry, M

In sum, 26 non-NIV versions of the 35 versions checked agree with 1611, 2011+ AV1611s in Matthew 11:12.

Results of the Comparison #2 – Non- NIV Agreement with the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12

4 Non-NIV Post 1611 Versions

NCV, NLT, NWTs

The NCV, NLT, NWTs read as follows.

"Since the time John the Baptist came until now, the kingdom of heaven has been going forward in strength, and people have been trying to take it by force."

"And from the time John the Baptist began preaching and baptizing until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people attack it."

"But from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of the heavens is the goal toward which men press, and those pressing forward are seizing it."

Results of the Comparison #3 – NIV Editions

3 NIVs, the 1973 NIV, 1996, 2007 Gideons NIVs agree with the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12.

The results for the 2005 TNIV, 2011 NIV – repeated for the sake of completeness - with respect to the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12 are as follows. Note the highlighted phrases.

1984 NIV: “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.”

2005 TNIV: “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been ~~forcefully advancing~~ subjected to violence, and ~~forceful men lay hold of~~ violent people have been raiding it.”

2011 NIV: “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been ~~forcefully advancing~~ subjected to violence, and ~~forceful men lay hold of~~ violent people have been raiding it.”

In sum, 3 non-1984 NIV Editions, the 1973 NIV, 1996, 2007 Gideons NIVs, agree with the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12 and the 2005 TNIV, 2011 NIV agree with the 1611, 2011+ AV1611s in Matthew 11:12.

Overall Results Summary

In sum overall, 28 of the 35 versions checked agree with the 1611, 2011+ AV1611s in Matthew 11:12 and 7 agree with the 1984 NIV, or 80%/20% for/against the 1611, 2011+ AV1611s or 4:1 ratio.

Overall Observations

Note first that none of the pre or post 1611 sources are authoritative with respect to the 1611 Holy Bible. They are simply witnesses for or against the text of 1611 Holy Bible, reflecting translators’ perceptions over the centuries of what is or is not **“the word of God”** 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

The pre-1611 sources usually agree with the AV1611 where the post-1611 sources, e.g. the 1984, 2011 NIVs, depart from it, but in Matthew 11:12, *even the post-1611 editors*, by and large, couldn’t find either a textual or translational reason for disagreement with the 1611, 2011+ AV1611s reading in Matthew 11:12 *and neither could those of the latest NIV edition, i.e. the 2011 NIV.*

It should be remembered that the 2011 NIV replaces both the 1984 NIV and the 2005 TNIV.

It appears therefore that the Biblica/Zondervan NIV editorial committee³³ i.e. for the 2011 NIV decided that it was better to discard the 1973-1984 reading **“forcefully advancing”** in Matthew 11:12 and essentially abide by the time-honoured 1611 Holy Bible reading **“suffereth violence.”**

Note in passing that any of the Lord’s people, of an amillennial or postmillennial persuasion, who believes that God is **“forcefully advancing”** His worldwide kingdom through them as individuals is almost certainly experiencing Hebrews 12:11, with the Lord seeking to refine them as individuals, 1 Peter 1:6-7 **“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ,”** not forging ahead through them with any global kingdom. See remarks under ***The Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God.***

Hebrews 12:11 reads as follows. **“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”**

Such folk are urged to look forward to the peaceable outcome of their chastening from the Lord.

Application

1 Thessalonians 5:21 should be applied. **“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”**

In review, when 1 Thessalonians 5:21 is applied with respect to 35 of the most prominent witnesses for and against the AV1611 with respect to Matthew 11:12:

- 9 pre-1611 bibles agree with the 1611, 2011+ AV1611s
- 5 Catholic versions with the 1611, 2011+ AV1611s
- 9 post-1611 non-NIV versions agree with the 1611, 2011+ AV1611s
- 3 Greek-English Interlinears agree with the 2011+ AV1611

- *The 2005 TNIV, 2011 NIV, which replaces all earlier Biblica/Zondervan NIVs, agree with the AV1611*
- 7 versions, the 1973 NIV, 1996, 2007 Gideons NIVs, NCV, NLT, NWTs agree with the 1984 NIV.

The witnesses for the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12 number 28.

The witnesses for the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12 number 7.

The witnesses for the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12 outweigh the witnesses for the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12 in ratio 4:1.

The witnesses for the AV1611 and against the 1984 NIV in Matthew 11:12 include the current i.e. 2011 Biblica/Zondervan NIV.

In view of:

- The overwhelming majority of witnesses for the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12, including many i.e. the post-1611 sources that often disagree with it
- The quality of many of the witnesses for the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12, namely the pre-1611 English Protestant bibles
- The accuracy of the AV1611 in Matthew 11:12 with respect to the rest of scripture and history as a whole
- The agreement of *the latest* i.e. 2011 NIV in Matthew 11:12 with the AV1611

The 1984 NIV reading in Matthew 11:12 must therefore be rejected as an amillennial or postmillennial aberration, *not* scripture and not ***“the word of God”*** but merely ***“the word of men”*** 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Alan O'Reilly

March 2012, December 2020

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