

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Lesson 40, Chapter 11 Continued

Perhaps one of the more important, yet difficult to capture, statements made by Christ is found in Matthew 11:11 - 15. Another comes at the end of the chapter that we'll get to later. We're going to get pretty detailed and nuanced today because the subject matter calls for it. I'm also going to make some frank comments on a few well entrenched and accepted Church doctrines that need to be tested against their claims. Let's begin by reading those 5 challenging verses.

RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 11:11 - 15

Instantly our eyes and ears ought to be on alert with what Yeshua says in His characterization of John the Baptist that no human being ever born is greater than John. However... the **least** in the Kingdom of Heaven will be greater than he is. We ended last week with our connection between this statement and the one Yeshua made during His Sermon on the Mount. I'll quote for you only a couple of verses to jog your memories.

CJB Matthew 5:18-19 ¹⁸ Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened. ¹⁹ So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Clearly Yeshua's use of the phrase "the least in the Kingdom of Heaven" means the same thing here in Matthew 11:11 as it did in Matthew 5:19 otherwise it can't be deciphered in either statement. Before we address that let's discuss for a

moment why Yeshua says that among people who are born (which is all people), no one is greater than John. It is my opinion that while Jesus says this in a rather sweeping, all inclusive way meaning the entire human race, in fact this is intended within the context of what He said immediately prior to verse 11. It was that John is not only a prophet, he is more than a prophet. So we need to take this as meaning not only that there is no human being greater than John, but also there is no prophet greater than John.

The Early Church Father Jerome says this in his Commentary on Matthew.

John is greater than the other prophets for this reason: the other prophets predicted to John that someone was to come, but John pointed out with his finger that he had indeed come; saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world". And he reached not only the rank of a prophet but even to that of Baptist, by baptizing his Lord.

I agree with Jerome. Not only is John a great prophet in his own right, but he carried with him the spirit of Elijah, considered to be the epitome...the chief... of Old Testament Prophets. Many of those Old Testament prophets spoke of a future time when a Deliverer would come for the sake of Israel, and also of another man that would announce the arrival of that Deliverer. The herald of the coming of the Messiah turned out to be John the Immerser (immerser is a much more apt title within the Jewish context than "Baptist"). So John's divine purpose was not as the prophesier of what was to come later, but rather he was to announce the present fulfillment of what those earlier prophets foresaw and foretold (just as an angel announced the birth of that same Messiah, as the Old Testament prophets foresaw and foretold).

Even so, Christ says John is going to be considered less than the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. Does this statement baffle you? How can the unmatched John the Baptist (at least according to Jesus), the honored messenger of Christ's arrival, at the same time be considered as less than the **least** in the Kingdom over which Jesus shall rule forever? To unravel this mystery we have to go back to the instruction I gave you some weeks ago on Matthew chapter 5 verses 17 - 20. It is that Yeshua says that His followers, without exception, are to continue following the Law and the Prophets (which, as with Paul, is a term that points to the entire Hebrew Bible of that day.... what Christians call the Old Testament). Further, there is a consequence for Believers.... without exception..... who obey and teach the Law of Moses and the Prophets, versus those who don't. Those

who do teach and obey will be awarded the status of greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who do NOT teach and obey will be given the status of the least. But what must be kept in mind is that whether one is the least or the greatest, all those who follow Christ will be members of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Our earthly social or economic status or even our accomplishments..... accomplishments that may, ultimately, benefit the Kingdom of Heaven.... may have some bearing on our status in the Kingdom of Heaven. But clearly our acceptance, obedience to, and teaching of the Law of Moses and the Prophets during our lifetimes are the largest determining factors NOT on whether we are admitted as members of God's Kingdom, but rather what our societal status will be within God's Kingdom. Yet even knowing that it seems almost as though Yeshua has a bone to pick with John, and says that John is perhaps not going to be a member of God's Kingdom. At least it certainly **seems** to read that way.

The Early Church Father Theodore of Mopsuestia had something important to say on this matter. What makes him an expert source is that not only in the late 300's A.D. did he say what I'm about to present to you, he sprang from the Antioch branch of early Christianity. That is, he received his religious training and ordination in the Church there in Antioch. Antioch was Paul's hub of operation 3 centuries earlier, and he established several believing congregations there. So a certain set of traditions and doctrines developed in Antioch that grew out of what Paul had taught them and naturally that influenced, if not represented, their core beliefs. Theodore records the following words of how John can be the greatest of men, but still be considered less than the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. These words are from a fragment of a small collection of works attributed to him:

If John is being judged against other people according to being born from a woman, he will be found to be the greatest of them all. He alone was filled with the Holy Spirit inside his mother's womb, so that he "leaped"; and his mother prophesied because she partook this as well. But if John is judged in relation to those who are to partake of the Spirit in the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus says, he will be found to be the least. Thus Jesus says that John by no means partakes of such great grace as those who will be reborn into immortality after Jesus' resurrection from the dead and that John will experience physical death. At that time, however, the Spirit's abundance toward people will be so great that no one who has partaken of even the least part of it can afterward fall into death.

In other words, Theodore says that when it comes to the deeds and accomplishments of humans.... even at the Lord's direction.... John is the greatest. But... those deeds have not in some way earned him a place of honor in God's Kingdom because that is not the standard. So after heaping praise on John, Yeshua uses John's greatness to contrast with the overwhelmingly superior greatness of the Kingdom of Heaven and its members. J.C. O'Neil says it best: ***"Jesus is not contrasting all begotten of women with John at their head, and some other group of men the least of which is greater than John; he is contrasting the present state of the greatest men with the future state of even the least in the Kingdom of Heaven"***. I would add that the future state of men that O'Neil speaks about takes a leap forward upon the resurrection of Yeshua, and then yet another leap at Pentecost upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the small community of humanity that bows to Yeshua as their Savior, Lord, and King. So: Yeshua has not turned from praising John to criticizing him.

It is interesting that although it only appears in some Bible versions, the word "amen" is what actually begins verse 11. The CJB (unfortunately) chooses not to use "amen" but changes it to "yes" and thus the verse itself loses much of its impact. Amen is a term of special reverence and soberness that more means "truly" than it does "yes", especially when it begins a thought. When "amen" begins a sentence in the Bible it is used in a similar way to the term "behold". That is, it is a prefix to a statement that tells us to pay special attention to what follows it, usually because a revelation is coming. And what is coming is that because John has fulfilled his role as special messenger of the entrance of the world into a new age.... the messianic age... when the Kingdom of Heaven has arrived into the world (albeit in its infant stage).... then in a certain sense John **is** a person of the past. This is not to mean he is now irrelevant anymore than was Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, and so many others because their work was completed and it occurred in the past. Rather it is that each had his own irreplaceable mission and role in God's plan of Redemption History that brings us up to the time of John and Christ.

But here is what separates the sheep from the goats (so to speak) among Jesus's followers today. If you get nothing else from today's lesson, please absorb this. While in a sense John is indeed a representative of the past, it mostly means being a representative of the time prior to the resurrection of Christ. A time when the initial purpose of Yeshua was to bring salvation to the world by means of Him atoning for our sins through the spilling of His innocent

blood. What this does **not** mean is that John belongs to the era of the Law and thus John and the Law are organically connected such that together they are both destined for the grave in order to be replaced by a new dynamic called grace. If that were the case then Yeshua's Sermon on the Mount was pointless; or worse, it was intentionally misleading. And especially misleading would have been Yeshua's proclamation in Matthew 5:17 - 20 that He did NOT arrive on this earth to abolish the Law and the Prophets, and in fact a Believer in Him will be measured in the Kingdom of Heaven (a kingdom that arrived with John) according to his or her personal devotion and obedience to the Law and teaching that truth to others.

I'll put that same thought in the negative, now, to perhaps make the point easier to see. Those who claim that the Law is dead and in the grave (along with John) and so the Law has no role in the life of a Christian, have ignored and dishonored the direct and unmistakable teaching of Christ on this subject and instead have adopted a pleasing manmade Church doctrine to replace it. Further, while such a wrong belief and intentional lack of devotion to the Law of Moses may indeed not necessary result in that person's exclusion from God's Kingdom, it unequivocally **does** put them at the lowermost rung of the societal ladder of the Kingdom. These are not my words, but Yeshua's in Matthew 5. This matter that I have just set before you is second in its seriousness and eternal impact ONLY to the matter of accepting Yeshua as Savior in the first place. Now for a warning. I have said to all who have ever heard me that Christ is the only way to peace with God and life eternal; therefore you cannot stand before God and plead that no one ever told you. It is the same about our obligation to obey the Law of Moses. This means that on Judgment Day you no longer have an excuse to stand before God and say that you were intentionally disobedient to the Law because the Church misled you and so you didn't know. But you know now, and so you can change now.

In verses 12 and 13 Yeshua is making at least a couple of different points. The first thing He is doing is emphasizing that John's and the Kingdom of Heaven's arrivals ran in parallel. Thus it is not at all difficult to determine when the Kingdom of Heaven began its reign on earth; it coincided precisely with the life and times of John the Baptist. So we can come pretty close to marking a date on the calendar. The second thing is that since John's and the Kingdom of Heaven's arrivals, so-called "violent ones" are trying to thwart its presence and purpose. The number of interpretations of what this means are so many that it is not possible to present them all. Some go so far as to say that the "violent ones" are

a nickname for Jesus and His followers. Others say that this can only be talking about the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Still others believe that the "violent ones" represent a group of Jewish fanatics like the Zealots. I will tell you what I think, but I confess that I'm not wed to it. Yet considering both the local and the larger context, for me it best explains the intended meaning of the term.

Whoever the "violent ones" are, they are in opposition to the Kingdom of Heaven and so they are trying to thwart it in its earliest stage. Therefore whoever or whatever this might be, its source is evil. Because the Kingdom of Heaven and John the Baptist were connected, appearing at the same moment in history, then it can be said that the Kingdom of Heaven has been attacked since John because it has existed since John. The Kingdom of Heaven can be defined as essentially the ideal of God's Kingdom **in** Heaven, but now also existing on earth..... hence the name the Kingdom **of** Heaven. This spiritual Kingdom of God could not be touched by evil since prior to John it **ONLY** resided in Heaven and was carefully guarded by legions of angels. But now that a form of it has been birthed on earth, in its infancy it is being attacked by the forces of evil (to nip it in the bud, so to speak). This is in clear parallel to the Messiah being born. When Yeshua was the Word living in a purely spiritual form in a purely spiritual Heaven, He was safe and no evil could attack Him. But once He was born by means of a woman into the physical world on earth, the attack could begin because the earth is influenced under Satan's regime. Soon after His birth the wicked Herod tried to attack Yeshua and so Joseph and Miriam took the Christ child and rushed to Egypt. The immediate danger passed when Herod died; however the attacks on Yeshua went on to His death and of course it was these attacks of evil that directly led to His execution.

I think we could justifiably say that it was the "violent ones" that pounced upon Yeshua starting at His birth, just as He could say that it was the violent ones that pounced upon the Kingdom of Heaven at its birth. So the "violent ones" is a somewhat expansive term. It seems to me that we needn't try to distinguish between the physical, fleshly violent ones (wicked humans) versus the spiritual violent ones (demons); they are essentially one in the same. And we also don't need to make the work of the violent ones based upon the time and the era that it happens. The Kingdom of Heaven was attacked immediately upon its arrival on earth in John's day, and it will continually be attacked by spiritual and physical violent ones until Yeshua returns in the future to subdue our planet, rid it of evil, and rule over it. Therefore the term "violent ones" means all physical people and all spiritual entities that are evil and those that participate in trying to thwart God's

plans, which are wrapped up in the Kingdom of Heaven. The violent ones attack in all eras and all times since John the Baptist. The violent ones are trying, by force, to take the Kingdom away from God. I concede that it is possible that there is a different and better meaning of violent ones; but with the information we currently have I'm confident that this best captures it the way Yeshua intended it.

Verse 13 follows up with Christ declaring something that is so very simple and plain in its words and meaning, yet the vast bulk of Christian leadership has never been able to accept it. Thus they claim that this verse is too complex to be taken at face value, so it can only mean something else. Plainly it has Jesus saying that the prophets (of old) and the Law of Moses prophesied until John (the CJB uses the term the Torah instead of The Law, which is close enough in meaning and is probably actually more accurate in the sense it was thought of by 1st century Jews). Before I tell you what it means..... and what it does not mean.... let's begin by setting the subject and the context. What's the context of this verse? The arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven. That is, Yeshua is saying that all the Prophets and the Torah prophesied about the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. So while the context is the Kingdom of Heaven, the subject is prophecy. Upon the arrival of John, all prophesying about the future coming of the Kingdom has come to a close. Why? Because the Kingdom has arrived and so those prophecies are now fulfilled. But since the Kingdom is invisible, somebody has to announce its presence or who would know? That person is John, says Christ.

Unfortunately because Christianity has historically declared the Law of Moses to be an abolished dispensation of the past so that obedience to God in any tangible sense is also a thing of the past, and by contending that the divine rules and regulations given on Mt. Sinai are also but legalistic and inferior things of the past, therefore in the new messianic age we can just kind of be nice to one another and make it up as we go according to how we feel in our hearts. Therefore it is nearly universal claimed within Christianity that in verse 13 we have Yeshua stating that the era of the Law is gone and the era of grace has replaced it. Never mind that those words are simply not present. Disregard that if such a claim were true then we have a rather schizophrenic Yeshua saying (as plainly as it gets) in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 that He did **not** come to abolish the Law, then turning around a few weeks later and saying that He did. Nothing in this verse makes a claim that the Law is abolished. Rather Yeshua's claim involves.... what? Prophecy. Only prophecy. And it is that prophecies about the Kingdom of Heaven are found both in the Law (the Torah) and in the

Prophets..... which is absolutely accurate and true. Then logically, since the thing that was prophesied for hundreds of years has come to fruition (The Kingdom of Heaven has arrived) then that's the end of any prophesying about it. When did that event occur? As Yeshua says; it happened upon the coming of John the Immerser as God's messenger. Case closed.

Verse 14 throws out another challenging comment by Yeshua, which has resulted in several different interpretations. He says: "Indeed, if you are willing to accept it, he (John) is Elijah, whose coming was predicted". Please notice: as we have been dealing with for the past several minutes, prophecy and prophets continues to be the subject of Yeshua's statements. One of the most prevalent interpretations of this verse among Bible scholars is to not bother to interpret it at all, but rather to declare this verse as something Matthew made up out of his own mind and added in order to guide (or in some Bible scholars' view, to mislead) Christians into Matthew's way of thinking. Therefore, it is simpler to just skip it, in the same way we are to just skip over Matthew 5:17 - 20 as being words that are not credible. Why is this? I hope that you are all beginning to understand that, sadly, mainstream Christianity's clergy along with many theologians over the centuries have established certain doctrines to fit an agenda, and whatever is found in the Bible that doesn't validate that agenda is said to be either a mistake, or it is misunderstood and doesn't mean what it says. Why is this particular verse a problem for theologians? Because once again we have Yeshua referring to Old Testament prophets and prophecies, that are supposed to have become irrelevant once He and John appeared. In this case, that prophet is Malachi and what he has to say is too Jewish for a gentile Church.

^{CJB} **Malachi 3:22-24** ²² *"Remember the Torah of Moshe my servant, which I enjoined on him at Horev, laws and rulings for all Isra'el.* ²³ *Look, I will send to you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of ADONAI.* ²⁴ *He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers; otherwise I will come and strike the land with complete destruction." [Look, I will send to you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of ADONAI.]*

The involvement of Elijah in the End of Days was an accepted matter in Christ's day and remains an important element of Jewish tradition and belief to this day. In a well written article by Jews for Jesus, the matter of Elijah is explained from the Jewish perspective.

This is the 3rd "forerunner" prophecy. Isaiah 40:3 -4 spoke of a voice crying out to prepare the way of the Lord in the desert; Malachi 3:1 prophesied of a messenger preparing God's way and now in Malachi 3:22 -24 (in some Bibles it is Malachi 4:5 - 6) God sends the prophet Elijah before the "great and awesome Day of the Lord" comes. Elijah's mission is to bring about reconciliation as the passage indicates: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction." Based on this passage and also on the fact that Elijah did not die but was taken up to heaven directly, Jewish tradition spoke often of the future return of Elijah. As an example, in the Mishnah (Eduyot 8:7), Elijah will come to settle all disputes and reconcile all discrepancies in the holy books. In that passage of the Mishnah, discussion ensues as to what Elijah will accomplish. At the end of the passage, "The Sages say, [Elijah will come]... to make peace in the world, as it is said..." and then this is followed by quoting the Malachi passage. He is also involved with the resurrection of the dead in the Mishnah, Sotah 9:15: "The resurrection of the dead shall come through Elijah of blessed memory." The resurrection was expected to happen at the end of history, so Elijah here is definitely associated with the end of time. And of course at Passover an entire place setting is put out for Elijah as well as a special cup of wine, and the door is opened for him to enter. For the hope at Passover is that if Elijah comes, the Messiah himself cannot be far behind.

In the time of Jesus, messianic expectation was never far from the surface, and speculation was that both John the Baptist and Jesus were the reappearances of ancient biblical figures. For example, see this passage in Matthew:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:13–16) This is quite an interesting assortment of guesses! Some thought John the Baptist had come back to life, having previously been beheaded ([Matthew 14:10](#)). Others thought he was Elijah the prophet, while others speculated that he was Jeremiah come back – perhaps because both

preached judgment and had hard words concerning people's trust in the Temple. And "one of the prophets" in general ends the list of guesses.

So in this article from Jews for Jesus we see the important place Elijah continues to hold in the traditions of Judaism even from Yeshua's time. Christ assigns Elijah's mission (at least part of it) to John the Baptist. In Matthew's Gospel it is almost as though John the Immerser is Elijah's agent in the same way that Yeshua the Son, is God the Father's agent. We must not imagine that John is a reincarnation of Elijah or a change in form of Elijah to that of John. This possibility was actually a proposal of some of the Early Church Fathers, including most notably Tertullian. Matthew would never have accepted such a point of view.

The most important take away from this statement for those Jews that were listening to Christ (and should be for us) is that the appearance of Elijah (and therefore John) signals the beginning of The End. So Yeshua is unequivocally validating the general belief of Jewish religious leadership and Jewish society that they were living in the Latter Days. What they could not have known is that there would be **two** Latter Days, and in both of them the Messiah would appear as would Elijah. In this first of the two Latter Days, John represents the appearance of Elijah in the sense of him carrying the spirit of Elijah, and that means it in the sense of carrying out Elijah's prophesied mission. However as the Jews for Jesus article shows us, because Judaism doesn't allow for two Latter Days (only 1), then Elijah can only come once..... in whatever form he comes.... and for them this has not yet happened.

As those of you who have studied my commentary on the Book of Revelation know, it is my conviction that one of the famous Two Witnesses that appear during the reign of the Anti-Christ will be Elijah in the flesh. Since all men are destined by God to die once, and Elijah did not die but ascended to Heaven alive, then he still has a destiny with death. Since John the Baptist carried the spirit of Elijah as Elijah's earthly agent (so to speak), then John's death was not representative of the death of Elijah any more than Christ's death on the cross was representative of the death of God The Father. But in Revelation chapter 11 when we read of the 2 Witnesses who mysteriously appear and display awesome powers, they both die. Since I believe one of them to be Elijah, then this death would fulfill his destiny of dying once.

Let's read a little more of Matthew 11.

RE-READ MATTHEW 11:16 - 19

Yeshua asks a rhetorical question: "What can I compare this generation with?" He then immediately offers the comparison. This generation, He says, are like little children sitting in marketplaces and calling out to one another that they made happy music, but no one would dance to it. And they made sad music, but no one would cry. The first order of business is to discern just who Jesus is talking about. "This generation" doesn't mean "everyone" per se but it does seem to mean "all living Jews" that were contemporary with Christ. Probably the best way to understand it is as in the same sense God characterized the so-called Exodus generation; those who wandered in the Wilderness upon fleeing Egypt.

^{CJB} **Deuteronomy 1:35** ³⁵ *'Not a single one of these people, this whole evil generation, will see the good land I swore to give to your ancestors...*

^{CJB} **Deuteronomy 32:3-5** ³ *"For I will proclaim the name of ADONAI. Come, declare the greatness of our God!* ⁴ *The Rock! His work is perfect, for all his ways are just. A trustworthy God who does no wrong, he is righteous and straight.* ⁵ *"He is not corrupt; the defect is in his children, a crooked and perverted generation.*

So here the "generation" is a general term meaning the entire lot of people who left Egypt as a group as opposed to those who came before them and after them. The Exodus group consisted of a broad age range. This of course doesn't mean every last individual within the group shares this condition; rather it refers to an overall, or the most conspicuous, that best represents the condition of the people as a national community. In this case the condition is wickedness and perversion.

In context, this 1st century generation Jesus is talking about can be specifically identified as those who oppose John the Baptist and Christ. And those who oppose them (those of the children in the marketplaces illustration) insist that others join them and march to their tune, rather than joining John and Yeshua. The illustration is that if the children ("this generation") sing a happy tune, everyone is to dance to it or they are considered out of step. If these same children change-up and now decide to sing a sad tune, then everyone is to change direction along with them and dance to that tune or they are again considered out of step. It is terrifyingly easy to give you a modern day analogy of this. Are we... every last one of us.... not living in a generation that is behaving in such a way in the year 2020 that they were in Jesus's generation? We are

among a generation that is uniquely characterized as insisting that everyone is to believe as their faction believes, and to act as they act, and to choose as they choose or you (an outsider) will be attacked with the intent of silencing you and if possible destroying you. It may be a violent physical attack upon your person or your family; or perhaps you'll have your car or business vandalized. Maybe you'll be denied any voice to express your viewpoint. Cities are taken over and normal commerce and living conditions are suspended by the most fanatical who demand that governments and the population at large support them.... or else face their wrath. In this age of the tsunami-like influence of social media, one must agree and conform with the social trends and mindsets that come and go in chaotic fashion or risk having your reputation destroyed, your life reduced to a shambles, and your peace taken from you. And to prove that this illustration of the generation of today is representative of the one that Jesus was criticizing, just listen to His next words.

In verse 18 He says of John the Baptist that he came fasting (meaning it in the religious sense) and not drinking (meaning not drinking wine as a display of holiness like a Nazarite would), and so the politically correct of that generation who oppose him shout to one another that this can only indicate that John must be demon possessed (probably more meaning that he was crazy). But, when the Son of Man (Jesus) came eating (meaning not fasting) and drinking wine, then the same politically correct of that generation who opposed John said that Yeshua was a glutton and a drunkard for doing the opposite. Christ gave an illustration of how it doesn't matter what you do or what you say; if you represent the opposed, nothing you do or say will be judged as right or good. You will be criticized and slandered and have your character attacked and be marginalized if you refuse to join the crowd.

Then this sort of straw-man attack Yeshua is offering turns to the company He keeps. Yeshua is said to associate with tax collectors (Jews who are intelligent, educated, and make a good living at their occupation, but are hated for it) and sinners (meaning Jews who are uneducated and poor, so they are considered incapable of correctly obeying the current slate of religious doctrines so they, too, are hated for it). Once again both ends of the spectrum of social company Jesus keeps are attacked: the educated and the ignorant. The well-to-do and the poor. He can do nothing right. So unless His social company falls in line with what is expected and accepted by the politically correct crowd, he is foolish and wrong and despised. Yeshua's response is: "Well, the proof of wisdom is in the actions it produces". That is, in speaking to this corrupt generation Christ says that you

pat yourselves on back, telling one another how very wise and clever you are; but your actions betray your lack of wisdom. What actions? Although it is a general statement, no doubt the focus of it is the lack of reception of Elijah's agent, John the Baptist, and of God's agent, Yeshua of Nazareth.

And what do we, the witnesses of the 21st century observe regarding the adherents to the faith of Jesus Christ? Believers in Him are more and more seen as foolish followers of ancient myth and primitive customs. We can do nothing right. We are characterized as ignorant and naive, holding back progressive society because society is moving forward and as a part of that forward motion (as a rule) it must necessarily include opposition to Jesus as Messiah or you may find yourself on the outside looking in. Should we be surprised by this unwelcome turn of events? Christ didn't seem to be. As Solomon once famously said:

^{CJB} **Ecclesiastes 1:9** *What has been is what will be, what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.*

We continue in Matthew chapter 11 next week.