

CHAPTER ELEVEN

in this context? To what sphere of human endeavor do they refer when used by One who presents Himself to all as Teacher?

EXPOSITORY SERMON CHAPTER ELEVEN "LOOKING FOR ANOTHER CHRIST"

Introduction: WHY look for another Christ? Because some are disappointed in the Christ given to us! This is not so surprising in light of the experiences of the people described in this chapter:

I. THE PERPLEXITY OF THE LOYAL-HEARTED (11:2-15)

A. John the Baptist: "If you are really the Messiah, how is it that the world goes on more or less as before, as if you had never come?"

1. This is the statement in other words of the problem of pain and evil: "Why does not God DO something about evil in the world, especially about the wicked themselves?"
2. It is similar to the question stabbing the conscience of our age: "If you are really the Church of the living God, if you really proclaim a Gospel of salvation and moral transformation that really works, why have you not done more to eliminate evil and initiate a practical demonstration of the rule and love of God on earth?" Our age just cannot ignore 2000 years of bad church history with its failures, corruptions and misrepresentations of Jesus.
3. As with all expressions of the problem of evil, these questions reveal an ignorance and a misapprehension of God's plans.
 - a. In the patient, merciful ministry of Jesus, God WAS doing a great deal about the injustices in the world.
 - b. Human intellect had failed to decipher the designs of God.
4. John's personal problem was the disproportional exaltation of Jesus' divine office as Judge, to the detriment of His merciful human ministry as the Son of man come to seek and save the lost.
 - a. The Law, Prophets and John had prepared Israel for the glorious coming of the King.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

- b. Jesus had come but apparently nothing was happening that would square with John's understanding of the coming Christ.
 - c. In desperation, John cries out: "Are you the coming One?"
5. But John's faith in the Lord brought him to no other source for answers to his dilemma.
- B. Jesus' answer: He appreciated the honest perplexity of His loyal prophet. He corrected His understanding and vindicated him completely. Notice the correction (11:6): "Tell John that although human intellect has failed to give him complete understanding of his problem, his intellect must submit to the wisdom of my methods and results. If his intellect judges my way not to be the best, it must see what I am accomplishing, even if it means turning his back upon his prejudices about what I should be doing. John must be content to say, 'God's methods are against my wisdom: I cannot understand why He does what He does, but I follow because HE leads me, for I have learned to trust Him.'"

II. THE FICKLENESS OF AN UNREASONABLE AGE (11:16-19)

- A. John had come protesting against the falsely-inspired merriment of his age.
- B. Jesus had come refusing to sorrow over the things that made men of His age mourn.
- C. Reaction of people in general: "If you are really the Holy One of God, why do you fraternize so familiarly with the rest of us? You are not saintly enough!"
 - 1. One reason for this reaction was the exaggeration of Jesus' divine character at the expense of His necessary and true humanity. Men thought that the great God would never so disturb Himself, so befoul Himself as to attend the banquet of a common sinner! Here again human intellect was at fault.
 - 2. Another reason is that human emotion is falsely stimulated. Men sought the inspiration of their joys and sorrows in the wrong places.
- D. Jesus' answer: "Human emotion must seek my inspiration, must learn to dance to my music, and mourn to my lamenta-

CHAPTER ELEVEN

tion. The age must discover that the only way into the Kingdom of God is that of beginning to rejoice where hitherto there had been no joy; to mourn where hitherto there had been no mourning. . . . Men must be done with dancing to the wrong music, with mourning over unimportant things."

- E. The Lord committed to the judgment of time that age dissatisfied with wisdom contrary to its fickle tastes and capricious emotions.

III. THE IMPENITENCE OF THE MOST FAVORED CITIES (11:20-24)

- A. Their reaction: "You cannot be taken too seriously as the voice of God. We plan to run our lives much as we have been doing it before you came along!"

1. Here is the depreciation of Jesus' divine authority and the demotion of the King to the level of any other human being.
2. Although these towns had personally witnessed Jesus' triumph over sin and its results that were causing the suffering in their midst, they did not recognize in His mastery a perpetual protest against their own sins. They remained rebels against God.
3. Here is the refusal of the will to submit to the control of God in Christ.

- B. Jesus' answer: "Your great opportunities make you so much more responsible before God for what you know, therefore your punishment for impenitence will be so much more severe! Change your mind about what I am teaching you: turn back upon your false concepts of the Kingdom of God and submit to His rule now!"

IV. THE FOLLY OF THE WISE AND THE WISDOM OF THE BABES (11:25-30)

- A. The wise and prudent reaction: "Any fool knows that yours is no way to establish a kingdom! Your program does not rhyme with any standard rabbinical formula of how the messianic kingdom has to be."

1. This is the refusal of human intellect to bow, acknowledging its own ignorance.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

2. The net result is the reduction of Jesus to less than a human prophet, for the wise see in this Nazarene something less than a sage whose advice should at least be considered.

B. The reason for this reaction is that God gives His greatest blessings only to the humble, but the human heart protests against the thought of starting all over again by being born again. People demand a religion that may be grasped as a prize for intellectual achievement; a religion that permits them to give full vent to their passions; a religion that grants them the dignity of their own self-will. But Christ demands that man surrender his darkened intellect, his vulgarized emotions and his prostituted will, so that he might begin again as a little child.

C. Who is a little child?

1. He is an ignorant man asking instruction.
2. He is an emotional person seeking proper inspiration.
3. He is a will searching for authority.
4. He is a weak one seeking power.
5. He is imperfect, but looking for perfection.
6. He trusts Jesus to lead him to find all this and more.

V. APPLICATION: How do people of our age look for another Christ?

A. By letting the disappointments and failures in our personal Christian life turn us aside from the Christ who actually came:

1. Do we have no assurance of forgiveness and relief from our guilt and sins?
2. Do we fail to find the joy and brightness we expected?
3. What kind of Christ did we expect? Does our *image* differ from the reality?

B. By letting the general condition of the world blind us to the real Christ and His purposes.

1. Jesus came to save the world and yet the larger portion of it not only remains unsaved but is also growing larger in proportion to the total population. How can He let this go on?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

2. If you look for another Christ, what kind of Messiah could alleviate the human predicament better than Jesus is now doing?
- C. We are not actually expecting the coming of another Christ that is not to be identified with Jesus of Nazareth, but the Jesus Christ whom we know will return in another form! (See Ac. 1:11; Phil. 3:20, 21)
1. When He comes, He will only seem to be another Christ different from the humble Galilean we once knew.
 - a. He will be a Christ whom most men had never believed in.
 - b. He will be a Christ whom most never expected to see come.
 - c. But He will be the very Christ whom John the Baptist said would come in blazing glory.
 2. But He will appear in His power and majesty to bring to a glorious conclusion the mission which He undertook in shame and weakness.
 - a. He has never changed His mission: it has ever been His intention to make righteousness to triumph over sin and get God's will done.
 - b. The same Jesus who was crucified in shame, raised in glory and now reigns at the Father's right hand, is even now perfecting His mission with an eye to that day when He will come for His saints.
- D. What then is to be our reaction?
1. We must ask ourselves, "Am I willing to admit my ignorance and ask instruction; am I willing to yield my emotional nature and take only His inspiration, dancing only to His piping, and mourning only to His lamentation; am I willing to take my will and submit it wholly to His authority; am I willing to take the place of unutterable weakness and depend upon His strength? Am I willing to confess my absolute and utter imperfection and give myself to Him for perfecting of all that concerns me?"
 2. "This is the passage from proud independence to simple confession of weakness. So men enter into this Kingdom. So men find their rest. . . . Our very pre-eminent re-

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

spectability prevents the definite daring necessary to get into God's Kingdom. We are prone to drift upon easy seas, to admire the visions of the beautiful land, consent to the beauties of the great ideal, and never enter in because we will not . . . consent to yield to the claim of the King. . . ."

3. "Let this be the hour when you have done with your dilettante fooling with sacred things. Let this be the night when you translate your sickly anemic imagination into grip, force, go and determination."

(The above outline and some of its points were suggested by G. C. Morgan's sermon "The Kingdom By Violence" in *26 Sermons by Dr. G. Campbell Morgan*, Vol. II, p. 229ff.)

Another outline of this chapter might be:

"JESUS JUDGES HIS CONTEMPORARIES AND HIMSELF"

- I. John the Baptist (11:2-15): "More than a prophet!"
- II. His people in general (11:16-19): "Like children!"
- III. The most favored cities (11:20-24): "Damned!"
- IV. The simple disciples (11:25-30): "Learned!"
- V. Himself (11:20-30): "The Unique Hope of the Race!"

EXPOSITORY SERMON CHAPTER ELEVEN

"REST IN A RESTLESS WORLD" (11:20-30)

Introduction: The newspapers of the world report riots that picture the great unrest of our world. In the great cities of the world every day is heard news of strikes, riots, protest movements, wars and famines. We wonder where this will all lead to or when it will end. Men's hearts faint for the fear and anxiety over the things that are coming over the world. And why should that be?

There is NO REST IN OUR RESTLESS WORLD, BECAUSE THERE IS NO CERTAINTY.