

(Matt. 11:1) - The Lord had commanded His disciples to go into "*THEIR CITIES*" preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, proclaiming salvation for sinners by God's grace in Christ, the one true Messiah as prophesied in the Old Testament (John 5:39-47). He enabled them to prove the power and authority of God in their preaching by giving them power to perform miracles as He Himself had done (Matt. 10:1,7-8). Here we see that He "*DEPARTED THENCE TO TEACH AND TO PREACH IN THEIR CITIES.*" His life on earth was consumed with doing His Father's business. His main work in all this was to keep the law and go to the cross to die for the sins of His people to establish the only perfect righteousness by which the Father justifies His chosen people. Doing His Father's will also involved preaching along with His disciples. Preaching the Gospel is God's appointed means by which He draws and calls His elect to salvation (John 6:44-45; Rom. 1:16-17; 6:17-18; 1 Cor. 1:18-21; 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13-14). The power of God that brings sinners to salvation is HIS power alone and not the power of any human preacher. It takes the power of God by the Spirit to bring sinners to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works. We must be born again from above to see and believe in Christ (John 3:3-7).

(Matt. 11:2-3) - John the Baptist was a sinner saved by God's grace. Like all sinners saved by grace, he had the remaining corruptions and weaknesses of the flesh with which to struggle. He was especially endowed with the power of God and the courage to preach the Gospel boldly. But here he was in prison for preaching boldly against the adulterous marriage of Herod and Herodius, the wife of his brother Philip (Matt. 14:3-4). So, John, being in prison for telling the truth, may have been sad and discouraged. He may have been like the other disciples, knowing the Gospel of God's grace in Christ, but not understanding yet the nature and establishment of the kingdom of God as it pertained to the earth (Acts 1:6-8). No doubt that he had prayed to be freed from prison, but upon his continued confinement, he may have become weak in faith and had lost some of his confidence in Jesus. This is "the sin which doth so easily beset us" (Heb. 12:1), which is sinful doubt due to our circumstances and trials. This is why we know that our perseverance in Christ and His truth is by God's power and grace in Christ towards us so that, even when we doubt, He will never leave us or let us go (Lam. 3:22-23; John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:33-39; 2 Tim. 1:12; 2:13). If we are one of God's elect, our sins were completely put away by Christ on the cross. He will not impute sins to us. He has imputed Christ's righteousness to us. He will not completely withdraw from us, and He will not let us completely withdraw from Him.

(Matt. 11:4-5) - The Lord told these men to report to John the doctrine they heard and the miracles they saw performed by Him. He preached the truth of how God saves sinners by His grace through the work He Himself would accomplish for His people. He gave sight to the blind, the ability to walk to the lame, cleansing for the lepers, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead. These were undeniable proofs of the deity of the Lord Jesus and evidences which fulfilled prophecies concerning the message, ministry, and mission of the Messiah (Isa. 29:18; 35:4-6; 42:6-7; 61:1-3). The message of the Gospel is so unique as it shows how salvation is totally conditioned on the glorious Person and finished work of Christ as Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people, God's elect, Jew and Gentile.

(Matt. 11:6) - Unregenerate people are offended in Christ when they see His message exposes their false hopes of salvation (John 3:19-20). This is the offence of the cross that shows how what man naturally highly esteems is an abomination to God as it denies His glory, cast shame upon Christ and the righteousness He accomplished by His death, and as it gives men room to

glory in themselves. These are the final words of our Lord sent to John the Baptist by way of these messengers. He was saying that those who endure to the end, who believe and follow Him regardless of the obstacles or opposition (even imprisonment), are truly blessed of the Lord. This is the blessing of God's grace and power that saves us and keeps us faithful to Christ.

(Matt. 11:7-8) - *“WHAT WENT YE OUT INTO THE WILDERNESS TO SEE? A REED SHAKEN WITH THE WIND? BUT WHAT WENT YE OUT FOR TO SEE? A MAN CLOTHED IN SOFT RAIMENT? BEHOLD, THEY THAT WEAR SOFT CLOTHING ARE IN KINGS' HOUSES”* - John the Baptist drew the attention of many people because they were curious about him. He did not fit the common view of a religious leader. He preached the Gospel boldly in the wilderness. John was different than their religious leaders, not only in his dress and place of ministry, but also in His message - *“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham”* (Matt. 3:7-9). This message was highly offensive as it called upon them to repent of their dead works and turn to Christ for salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life.

(Matt. 11:9-10) - *“BUT WHAT WENT YE OUT FOR TO SEE? A PROPHET? YEA, I SAY UNTO YOU, AND MORE THAN A PROPHET.”* Christ declared that John was not just another prophet but more as John was sent by God to be the forerunner of Christ, i.e. to announce the arrival of the Messiah on earth as prophesied by Isaiah (Isa. 40:3-4; John 1:29,36). John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets.

(Matt. 11:11) - Among all the prophets that had preached in the name of the Lord, there were none greater than John, for he had the honor of proclaiming the Lord's arrival into the world. The comparison between John and those who are *“THE LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN”* being *“GREATER THAN HE,”* speaks of their light and knowledge as well as their scope and sphere of ministry as it spread throughout the world. There are no degrees of position and reward in the kingdom of heaven. Salvation is all of grace, and Christ has all the preeminence in the kingdom of heaven.

(Matt. 11:12) - John proclaimed Jesus to be the true Messiah Who came to bear our sins away (John 1:29). The Spirit of God came in power upon the hearts of many who heard the Gospel from John's lips and brought them to have a sincere zeal to enter the kingdom of heaven. God would powerfully overcome their unbelief and cause them to lay hold of the kingdom willingly, whole-heartedly, and as passionately as a throng seeking to take a city by force (Psa. 110:3; Rom. 9:16).

(Matt. 11:13-15) - John was not Elijah, but he was connected with a prophecy that named Elijah (Mal. 4:5). John was the one whom Elijah prophesied would come, and he had the same message of Elijah, the Gospel of the kingdom as established in and by the glorious Person and finished work of the Messiah. John pointed sinners to the God of all grace in and by the Person and work of the Messiah, and he prepared the way of the Lord by announcing that Jesus of Nazareth was that same Messiah of Whom all the prophets spoke. Those who, by the power and grace of God, receive and believe this message of God's grace, have been given the gift of spiritual ears to hear the Gospel savingly and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:11-13).