

“Do We Look for Another?”

Introduction:

1. Scripture Reading: Matthew 11:1-3.
2. [title chart]. I started working on this material back in September with an intention on preaching it soon. But as is often the case, I begin working on something, then table it, then pick it up again and work on it, then lay it down, etc.
3. We are going to be looking at John’s question in Matthew 11:3. [C]I want to ask, “What leads men to look for another?” Whether it be the Christ or the church, what is it that draws people away from Jesus to look for another Christ? Sometimes we are quick to look for something external or something environmental and dismiss that they own their decision to walk away.

Discussion:

I. [C] Doubt can lead one to look for another.

- A. The Christians originally addressed in Hebrews were beginning to doubt which was leading them to depart (Heb. 3:6-12). *Doubt* attacks *confidence* which breaks down *joy* and *hope* (v. 6). This leads to rebellion and departure in heart and deed (7-12).
- B. Going back to our Scripture...John the Baptist was a great man (Matt. 11:7-11). But does the natural reading of this text suggest that doubts were rising in his heart?
 1. We may find this passage troubling that such a strong man of faith is asking such a doubt-filled question. Surely no prophet or a great man like John would ever have doubts. We are tempted to wrap up bible heroes in an impenetrable forcefield against sin and doubt. The temptation is to rewrite the Scripture and suggest that John sent these men to Jesus for their own doubts—not his. While I suppose that could be a possibility, it doesn’t naturally arise from this text. Why doubt that the sacred text could speak of the real threat of doubt in great men?
 2. Doubt can settle into anyone’s heart especially when one is sorely tried. Thomas saw great miracles of Jesus (feeding thousands, healing sick, and raising the dead) yet doubted that Jesus could ever live again after the brutality inflicted upon Him (Jn. 20:25).
 3. John was suffering in prison and wanted reassurance. Hardships can bring confusion, but we can learn from John, that when doubts arise, send them on to the right source for answers and comfort. John didn’t dwell in doubt but sent to secure real answers (Matt. 11:4-6). Sometimes it is appropriate to pray as the weeping father did, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mk. 9:24). Notice that Jesus gave a warning against being offended because of Him. What made others offended at Jesus? We will begin to answer that in the next lesson. But let’s add another point first as to what makes men turn away and look for another.

II. [C] Loving the world can lead one to look for another.

- A. Who is Demas? Demas worked in close union with Paul. “Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you (Col. 4:14). This verse makes no sense if they were unfamiliar with him.

1. He was a Gentile as this letter seems to make that identification (see Col. 4:10-14 Aristarchus [ehr-ihs-TAHR-kuhs], Mark, Jesus—Jews; Epaphras [EH-puh-fras], Luke, and Demas—Gentiles; hence Jews and Gentiles working together).
 2. He is listed with "my fellow laborers" which phrase implies very strongly that of a *partnership* in the work and responsibilities (Phm. 1:24).
- B. Yet one of the most haunting remarks of him is found in 2 Timothy 4:10.
1. "Forsaken" is to abandon, desert, leave in a strait. Where? Thessalonica.
 2. [cl] *Why?* Having loved this "present world." *Present* means just that, "at this time—the present." Paul uses the word "world" which has the meaning of age, or period of time.
 3. [cl] John warned believers to not love the world also, but he uses a different word for "world" than what Paul wrote. John referred to the cosmos, or the arrangement, constitution, government, decoration, or ornament of the world.
 - a) Paul spoke of Demas' love toward the present *eon of time*. John warns against the love of the cosmos all that fills the world's space.
 - b) Two questions come in view of this.
 - (1) First, "Am I living for the *space and decorations* found in this world or for the *kingdom of God?*"
 - (2) Secondly, "Am I living for the *time found presently in this world, or for eternity?*" Am I any different from Demas?
- C. We don't know the specifics of why Demas.
1. There is a little piece of ancient literature from Polycarp who was evidently an eyewitness and student under John. Many call Polycarp a bishop but we need to treat ancient literature with the same discerning eye as we treat Scripture. Where does Polycarp claim to be a Bishop from his pen? He doesn't in his letter to the Philippians. He simply says: "**Polycarp and the presbyters that are with him unto the Church of God which sojourneth at Philippi.**" He may have been a fellow elder or perhaps the preacher.
 2. I love this letter. He wrote it between AD 120-140 where he frequently quotes from Scripture, from John, Peter, Paul and Matthew's writings. His letter shows the biblical pattern of church organization was still being obeyed with elders and deacons over the local church. He penned a list of martyrs [Cx2]:

9:1 I exhort you all therefore to be obedient unto the word of righteousness and to practice all endurance, which also ye saw with your own eyes in the blessed Ignatius and Zosimus and Rufus, yea and in others also who came from among yourselves, as well as in Paul himself and the rest of the Apostles;

9:2 being persuaded that all these *ran not in vain* but in faith and righteousness, and that they are in their due place in the presence of the Lord, with whom also they suffered. For they *loved not the present world*, but Him that died for our sakes and was raised by God for us.¹

¹ Polycarp to the Philippians 9:1, 2. Translated by J.B. Lightfoot.

- D. With this phrase, Polycarp hints not only at the existence of the epistle of 2 Timothy, something modernists deny as being genuine, as well as to the apostasy of Demas. What seems to be implied is that Demas did not want to be a martyr, so he abandoned Paul in Rome just before he was executed. Demas was allured by his *present time*, not *eternal time*; his *present life*, not *eternal life*. This stood polar opposite to the message of the apostles (cf. Jas. 1:12). Demas example would have been a glaring failure on those of Smyrna and the example of Polycarp himself as he was not only willing to own the Lord but die a hideous death for the Lord, complimenting Revelation 2:10.

Conclusion:

1. [C] Let us learn:
 - a) To pursue answers by diligent study when doubts arise (Rom. 10:17).
 - b) That no Christian is immune to falling in love with the world. It is a discipline to not love the world (cf. Titus 2:11, 12). The solution to guard against loving this present time is in a text that Demas would have had access to and would have been very familiar with. The letter that mentions his name also tells us what we must do to remain pleasing to Christ (Col. 3:1-4). Our life is not here, but with Christ when He returns. Place our daily thinking on things above, not the earth else there will be a very disappointing end when Jesus returns (Col. 3:5-7).
 - c) To acquire a love with an eternal perspective versus a present world affection (emp. Col. 3:3, 4). When Paul wrote about Demas, he was nearing his end of this life and though it is dark everywhere, his resolve is like a street lamp at night (2 Tim. 4:6-8). What a contrast to that of Demas (4:10).
2. What would Jesus say about Demas (Mark 4:3-9; 14-20). If Demas left because he loved his time and didn't want to forfeit it in persecution, he falls into the second soil Mk. 4:17. He also lands in the condemnation of the 3rd kind of land—thorns (4:19). In either case, it is not the type of faith that will save.

SERMON 2 – Introduction

[C] In lesson 1, we looked at doubt and misplaced love. John had doubts, but he provided us with a positive example in how to deal with those by going to Jesus with His doubts and getting answers. Demas provided us with a negative example of why we should not have misplaced love—love for the world. What did his love for his present time benefit him today?

[C] We are going to talk about pride and we will see how pride was at the core of people rejecting Jesus. Recall Matt. 11:6; cf. 1 John 2:16.

III. [C] HE CAME FROM NO PROMINENT PLACE (JN. 1:45, 46)

- A. There was a preconception against Nazareth as well as all of Galilee or northern Palestine (Zebulun and Naphtali [NAF-tuh-lai]). Some are prejudiced against people by where they live also.
 - 1. Galilee had no prominent learning center. It wasn't known for educational pursuits but for fishermen and tradesmen.² It was a land of darkness that had very little esteem. It was populated with Gentiles. In this dark land, the light first dawned in the Messiah's work (Matt. 4:14-17). Preaching the light demands repentance!
 - 2. [cl] Prominent rabbis held the Jews in Galilee with contempt (Read Jn. 7:45-52; cf. Acts 2:7).
- B. [C] Matthew addressed this humble quality of the Messiah in a difficult prophecy (Matt. 2:19-23).
 - 1. [cl] *History:* Archelaus [ahr-kee-LAY-uhs] was a ruthless brutal ruler like his father. Herod the Great, decided to place a huge golden eagle over the temple gate. Two rabbis encouraged their disciples to tear it down. Herod burned the two rabbis to death. After Herod's death and just when Archelaus began to reign, a riot started due to what was done to these rabbis. Archelaus squelched the riot by killing 3000 Jews. No wonder Joseph was afraid to live in Judea and chose Galilee where Antipas peacefully ruled as tetrarch of Galilee (Matt. 2:22).
 - 2. *The problem:* no such Scripture exists with this quote.
 - 3. *The answer:* Matthew does not say “the prophet” as one, but rather “the prophets” in the plural. Therefore, Matthew has no specific phrase in mind as it is suggested in this translation, but rather is speaking of the *summary* of Old Testament prophecy outlining the humble and obscure surroundings associated with the Messiah as alluded to in the prophets (see, Isa. 53:2, 3). Matthew 2 starts with His birthplace—Bethlehem and ends with His residence—Nazareth. Bethlehem was no prominent town but was a little place out of thousands and Nazareth was contemptible.
- C. [C] Application: How often do people wear pride like a necklace and look down on others. Jesus came from heaven and chose to live in humble surroundings. Paul tells disciples to reproduce in attitude what Jesus lived.
 - 1. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Phil. 2:5-8). And he wrote, “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion” (Rom. 12:16).
 - 2. When we set our minds on things above (Col. 3:2); on what heaven's orders were to free us from sin, it should be thought honorable to wear sackcloth and ashes in the house of God.

² Crain, S. Sellers, “Truth For Today Commentary: Matthew 1-13. P. 77.

3. But when we lift ourselves up, as one unreasonable man did to me, boasting of his willingness to lay aside a lucrative business to turn preacher, then we forget who we really are standing before—the all-holy God. It wasn't that this man looked at his business as rubbish to gain Christ, but rather, he used this supposed sacrifice to set himself up in the eyes of men to grant him authority before others. He used this to defend his ludicrous race to the courthouse position. When a Christian sets his minds on the "high things" on the earth: worldly honor, selfish pride, etc., then he sins against the entire model of the King of kings who came to earth to be treated like dirt, maligned, and put to death in the shame of a criminal. When one tries to elevate himself above his brethren, he commits three blunders:
 - a) First, he has forgotten that he was cleansed from sin and guilty of murdering Heaven's prince of peace.
 - b) Second, he has an inflated understanding of his own wisdom, skills, talents, etc. when in respect to a bigger picture, knows nothing at all. 1 Corinthians 8:2, "And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know." The world's smallest present has been defined as a man wrapped up in himself!
 - c) Third, he likely has an enormous deficiency in knowing those he thinks so little of. He hasn't walked in that person's shoes. A surfaced understanding of anyone or anything doesn't qualify for righteous judgment. Why do you think people despised Jesus? They were ignorant of His real identity. They saw a simple Galilean, not God. They saw a carpenter, not the creator! (*People make the same prejudicial mistakes today. A conservative preacher cannot come from Washington State. A preacher under forty cannot be of any benefit to a local church? A preacher from a scarcely populated prairie surely cannot be reasoner?*)
 - (1) *Prejudging* one allows one to *predefine* one without knowing one. It boxes one into a sphere that is comfortable, but it is delusional.
 - (2) I recall going to school with a man named Randy Cleveland, who had the physical presence of a bodybuilder and aspired to play football for the Florida Gators. He didn't appear to be very social, perhaps a little moody, an attitude, mean, perhaps angry, and very intimidating. People on campus generally avoided him. He wasn't one that you would ask to study together to pass a test. At weight lifting workouts most would leave him alone. One day I saw him alone on campus and made it a point to go to him and take the initiative to get to know him. I never really knew him outside of that limited environment. To my surprise, I found a man with a tremendous sense of humor, wit, and was even self-deprecating! Over the next several weeks he, Kelly and I developed a friendship. No wonder Jesus warned against superficial judgment (Jn. 7:24).
- D. [C] Where was Jesus really from? The irony: Was Jesus really from Nazareth or did He originally come from Bethlehem? Where did Jesus really come from?
1. [d] *Jesus came from eternity* (Mic. 5:2). About 700 years earlier, Micah spoke of Jesus. He identified Him coming from Bethlehem which is identified with Ephrathah in Judah to distinguish it from the Bethlehem in the north in Zebulun (Josh. 19:15). Micah is impressing us with the insignificance of the town—little among thousands. The impression is that

Bethlehem would be too little for such a great one to come from and yet, that was God's choice. This prominent one from an insignificant place was foreshadowed in God's choice of David who was also from Bethlehem (1 Sam. 17:12). Micah identifies the real place where Jesus was from and that is from eternity. The people only saw Jesus from Bethlehem and then a resident of Nazareth. But He is from eternity. They saw Him and did not esteem Him. But He stood in the strength and majesty of Jehovah (Mic. 5:4). They saw Him as a poor person, but He is the ruler (Mic. 5:2). 1 Corinthians 1:27-31 serves as divine commentary.

2. [cl] *Jesus came from heaven and not earth* "For none has ascended into heaven, but he who descended from heaven; the Son of Man, whose abode is heaven" (Jn. 3:13, LO). Notice then, that Jesus came from a place that is above all (cf. Jn. 3:31; 8:23). He is the epitome of condescension without an attitude of condescension. Yet Jesus was despised and rejected by those who trusted in themselves, by those who trusted in manmade tradition, by those who trusted in their riches and wealth. They despised Jesus because they didn't really know Jesus. They didn't know Jesus because they were too proud to hear Him. Psalm 59:12, "[For] the sin of their mouth [and] the words of their lips, Let them even be taken in their pride, And for the cursing and lying [which] they speak."
3. [cl] *Jesus came from what is truly rich*. To be "rich" is to have plenitude, abundance, and fullness. Notice 2 Corinthians 8:9. This plenitude stands in contrast to what makes hell "hell." Hell is a place of "anguish" (Rom. 2:9) which word in the original means narrowness of place. Jesus came from heaven and left what was rich or abundant to make us rich. This should take any amount of personal pride and crush it into dust. Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the LORD [is] to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate." Proverbs 29:23, "A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor."

Conclusion:

1. [C] While Jesus is from eternity, and left heaven, and the riches there, He extends eternal life and the glory of heaven to us (1 Jn. 5:11; Jn. 14:1-3).
2. [C] He did this for you, but he requires you to obey Him (Heb. 5:9). He makes no promise to give this to anyone other than those who "obey Him."

SERMON 3 - Introduction

Title chart—John sent some disciples to Jesus to ask Him if he were the One or should they look for another. We noticed that three things can take us away from Jesus to look for another [C]. All these points that follow stem from pride [C].

V. [C] UNINSPIRING TRADE AND FAMILY LIFE (MATT. 13:53-58).

- A. Further irony rejected by His own countrymen because...*of where He lived!* They could not see a great spiritual leader rising up from their own number and became offended at Him. They knew His relatives, they knew His life; his vocation of a carpenter (cf. Mk. 6:3). One commentary identified that the village, Sepphoris was a village that lay just a few miles north of Nazareth and was being rebuilt by Antipas during Jesus' childhood and adult years making that a likely place of employment for Joseph and Jesus.
- B. [C] If the Messiah had grown up with us, would we have become offended by His place of birth, residence, family members, vocation, etc.? The fact that all things were created by Jesus and to see Him taking of the things made and working to build things as a carpenter is an interesting thought. God chose a carpenter to build the church!
 - 1. *Yet many are offended by the Messiah for only building one church (Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:4).*
 - 2. *Many are offended by the spiritual emphasis that is placed on the church rather than the physical stamp they want (Jn. 18:36; Rom. 14:17).* Jesus didn't build the church with nails and wood, but rather by a sacrifice through nails, flesh, and blood (Acts 20:28)!
 - 3. *Many are offended by the simple plan of salvation as an entrance into the church (Mk. 16:16).* Surely there must be more or less than that: faith only, or a better felt than told experience!
 - 4. Paul warned that Corinth was prone to accept another Jesus (2 Cor. 11:1-4).

VI. [C] HE DID NOT HAVE FORMAL TRAINING (JN. 7:14, 15).

- A. Jesus did not receive formal training in the letters of the law as the Pharisees did and yet He was capable of handling the Scriptures and making arguments that these men could not answer.
 - 1. There seems to be a sentiment in some places that unless you have formal training at a college or religious institution that you cannot be qualified to preach and teach the word of God. Cliques are formed around some today. Did he go to FC? Has he studied religion in an academic institution? It might actually raise flags for me as the wisdom of the world lies in contrast to the wisdom of God.
 - 2. The church is supposed to be the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim. 3:15). As such, it is qualified to train men to do the work of an evangelist. Colleges do not make the church strong, Scripture does.
- B. On the other hand, Paul had received formal training and sat at the feet of Gamaliel and excelled in Judaism beyond his own contemporaries (Gal. 1:14, Acts 22:3). Yet he considered all to be rubbish in comparison to gaining the excellence of the knowledge of Christ (Phil. 3:8).

VII. [C] HE SPENDS TIME WITH SINNERS

- A. Both John and Jesus were maligned for their lifestyles (Matt. 11:16-19).
- B. John's fiery and stern message of "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" and his isolated lifestyle of living in the wilderness provoked his enemies to label him demon-possessed.

- C. On the other hand, Jesus was socially engaging and rejected the oral man-made traditions which infuriated many. He associated with sinners to save them but was slanderously dismissed as a glutton and a winebibber who befriended sinners.
 - 1. [cl] He chose a tax-collector to become one of His apostles (cf. Lk. 5:27, 28).
 - 2. Such a selection underscored that Jesus engaged sinners to reach them with grace (Lk. 5:29-32). Such conversions show that Jesus was not a glutton and babbling drunk. The true wisdom was demonstrated in sinners listening and repenting (Matt. 11:19b).

VIII. [C] HIS PREACHING IS HARD.

- A. [cl] Those of Nazareth did not like His pointed applications (Lk. 4:16-24).
- B. [cl] The rich young ruler didn't like the sacrificial demands placed on him and went away sorrowful (Lk. 18:23-25). Others asked, "Who then can be saved?" (18:26).
 - 1. Like many "health and wealth" preachers today, the Jews viewed that having a great amount of wealth was a testimony of God's favor (Psa. 112:1-3). They were looking at this rich man turn away, a good citizen, law-abiding, religious, and an all-around decent person and wondered "who can be saved?" If he cannot, then who can? If he cannot, how could we?
 - 2. While we don't subscribe that wealth reflects God's pleasure and poverty an expression of Divine displeasure, I have to ask, "Do we seek a new Messiah when the teaching of Jesus turns rich men away?" Have we the tendency to take out the frustration on the messenger when the affluent turn away?
- C. [cl] John 6:60, 61. What did they complain about? What did they consider "hard" (or rough)? "This" is referring to the Lord's teaching on feeding on Christ.
 - 1. The gospel at times has words, similes, and various expressions that uplift our hearts and at other times shock us. These are by divine design! They offend the hardened heart and draw in closer the committed. We have seen this kind of "hard" language in Luke 14:26, Rather than becoming a stumbling block those who want salvation investigated the Lord further.
 - 2. [C] However, some today will walk away from the church because the teaching is too hard or rough on them. They may become offended as those in Matthew 15:10-12.
 - 3. [C] If the Messiah's words are too hard, shall we look for a new Messiah (Jn. 5:43)? If His gospel is judged as too narrow, do we opt out for a different gospel? What I've seen brethren do is not to honestly state that they want a new Christ and a new gospel, they adjust their cross-hairs to the messenger and say, "It's time for a preacher change."

Conclusion:

- 1. [C] We need to resist the tendency to improve what is already perfect and trust the Lord that His word always accomplishes what it was designed to do (Isa. 55:10, 11).
- 2. [C] We must also understand the natural man will not receive the things of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14)? The natural man is not to be limited to one who wants to live in the sewers. He can be rich, powerful, and very intelligent and yet motivated primarily from natural instinct, rather than spiritual truth.