

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
N. Spiritual Realities In The Responses To God's Messengers
(Matthew 11:7-19; Luke 7:24-35)

I. Introduction

- A. Though John the Baptist was the Old Testament predicted Forerunner to the Messiah and though Jesus was the Messiah and God Incarnate, the responses of Israel to both of these messengers from God was mixed.
- B. Matthew 11:7-19 and Luke 7:24-35 reveal the spiritual realities in these responses, spiritual realities that exist in our present era, what every messenger of the Lord and every believer needs to know for his edification.
- C. We view these passages for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Spiritual Realities In The Responses To God's Messengers, Matthew 11:7-19; Luke 7:24-35.

- A. We recall that John the Baptist had suffered a long and thus confusing imprisonment so that he had sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask if He was the Messiah or if Israel was to look for someone else. We also recall that after Jesus had told John to trust Christ's fulfillment of prophecy by His ministry, John's disciples returned to give John Christ's reply that he trust God's Word and leave his theological confusion with God.
- B. John's suffering then elicited Jesus' comments on the spiritual realities in the responses that both He and John were facing, realities that are applicable to God's servants today (as follows), Matt. 11:7-19; Lk. 7:24-35:
 - 1. Jesus greatly honored John before the crowd to whom He was ministering, Matt. 11:7-15; Luke 7:24-28:
 - a. In a series of rhetorical questions that expected negative answers (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Matt. 11:7-8), Jesus asked the people if they had gone out into the wilderness to see John as a spiritually weak man shaken by the wind or as a materialistic man clothed in rich clothes, Matt. 11:7-8. According to Jesus, John was a spiritual giant who was not given to material prosperity.
 - b. Indeed, Jesus said that John was a prophet, but more than a prophet, that he was the Forerunner of the Messiah as predicted in Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 (Matthew 11:9-10; Ibid., fn. to Matthew 11:10). Jesus added that among those mortals who had been born of women, there had not risen a greater man than John the Baptist, Matthew 11:11a.
 - c. In an amazing afterthought, Jesus added that the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11b), for "(t)he privileges of Jesus' disciples sharing in the kingdom will be far greater than anything anyone could experience on earth" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 44).
 - 2. However, from the days of John until Jesus' ministry, the kingdom of heaven had suffered violence by evil rulers, both civil and religious, for they greatly opposed the ministries of Christ and John, Matthew 11:12.
 - 3. Nevertheless, for those who would believe it, Jesus added that John was the fulfillment of the Malachi 4:5 prophecy of the great Hebrew Old Testament prophet Elijah who was to come, Matthew 11:13-15.
 - 4. This greatness of John and Jesus was not understood or accepted by most of Israel's leaders and the people due to their unbelief, and Jesus described the exhibition of that unbelief in Matt. 11:16-19a; Luke 7:29-34:
 - a. Israel's unbelieving leaders and people were like children in the marketplace who could not be pleased by anything. "Like children rejecting the suggestions to 'play' wedding (flute . . . dance) or funeral (dirge . . . mourn) music, the people rejected both John and Jesus" (Ibid.).
 - b. "They were not satisfied with John the Baptist because he did not eat or drink, or with Jesus who did eat and drink with sinners. They said John had a demon, and they rejected Jesus as a glutton and a drunkard and a friend of tax collectors and 'sinners'" (Ibid.)!
 - 5. However, Jesus added that "wisdom is justified of all her children" (Luke 7:35 KJV), that the results of the ministries of John and Jesus, though their ministries contrasted in style from one another, still bore the fruit of repentance unto eternal life since both messengers taught God's truth in the Holy Spirit's power!

Lesson: *Jesus exposed the great contrast between the views that unbelieving Israel had about John and Himself: unbelievers viewed John as having a demon since he did not eat or drink like they thought he should, and they viewed Jesus as being a glutton and a drunkard since He dined with tax collectors and sinners. However, God viewed John as the greatest of the prophets as the Forerunner to the Messiah, and Jesus was God Incarnate as the Son of God. In the end, the godly production of the ministries by John and Jesus would reveal their greatness.*

Application: *(1) Unbelief in God's truths led unbelievers to have a low regard for God's messengers where God has a high regard for them. (2) May we thus believe God's Word through His messengers for blessing in eternity, (3) and may God's messengers keep ministering by faith, trusting God richly to vindicate them in eternity!*