

THE MESSAGE GIVEN TO A CHILDISH GENERATION MATHEW 11:16–27

Introduction: Man's Perversity

Every generation has its privileges. The privileges are used by some and ignored and abused by others. Since the coming of Christ, the greatest privilege in all the world has been the privilege of knowing Him personally, for it is Christ who makes us acceptable to God. And there is no greater privilege than the privilege of knowing God face to face. However, the vast majority have ignored and abused Christ; therefore, most do not know God, not personally.

When looking at His own generation, Jesus asked: "To what can I compare this generation?" And the most adequate illustration He could come up with was that of children (See Mt. 11:16-19). He was saying that His own generation was a *childish generation*. By *childish* He meant *perverse*. His generation was a perverse generation. They turned away from that which was right and good to that which was corruptible. They acted contrary to the evidence. They were opposed to that which was right, reasonable and acceptable; and they were obstinate in their opposition. They were just wrong-headed, mindless and contrary. They did not want the truth, so they made excuses for not receiving the truth.

Jesus had a message for such a *childish and perverse* generation. It is applicable to every generation.

- I. The childishness of this generation (vv. 16-19).
- II. The judgment of this generation (vv. 20-24).
- III. The blindness of this generation (vv. 25-27).

I. Mathew 11:16–19 Fault-Finding Generation

There is the childishness of this generation. The illustration is clearly understood. Children are playing in the market place. A few begin to play wedding music on their pipes and cry out to others, "Let's march and play 'wedding.'" The others shout back, "No. We don't want to dance around today." So the first group, still wanting to play, begin to play funeral music and shout back, "Well, let's play 'funeral'." "No. We don't want to play funeral either. We don't feel like acting sad."

1. The generation is contrary, mindless, playful. They are fault-finders who cannot be pleased. They find fault with whatever is suggested. They just cannot accept and be pleased with anything that puts restrictions upon their loose play. They find fault with a separatist approach to the gospel, and they also find fault with a sociable approach to the gospel.
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- a. They accused John of separation. John came neither eating nor drinking. He was a separatist. He was from the desert and lived a strict, austere life, being highly disciplined. He did not associate with people or make friends. He just isolated himself and cut himself off from everyone. He withdrew from society. His message was a gospel of repentance and separation from the things of the world. Therefore, he was accused of having a *devil* that is, of being mad and insane for choosing to live that way.
 - b. They accused Jesus of worldliness. Jesus was the very opposite of John. Jesus lived and preached a gospel of liberty. He ate and associated with the people, sharing in their social affairs. He moved among all sorts of people, mixing and making Himself accessible to all no matter how terrible they were thought to be. Therefore, He was accused of being a sinner Himself: a glutton, a winebibber, and an immoral friend of sinners. (It must be remembered that when Jesus moved about in the social functions of society it was for the purpose of witnessing to them, not to be a part of the worldly fellowship.)
2. The childish generation justifies its inconsistencies. John lived and preached a gospel of repentance and separation. Jesus lived and preached a gospel of liberty. The people were like children: they found fault with both and accepted neither. They just wanted to do their own thing. The final act of childishness was that they justified their inconsistency.

Jer 4:22 “My people are fools; they do not know me. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good.”

Eph 4:14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

1 Cor 3:1-2 Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly — mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

1 Cor 13:11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

Heb 5:12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

Thought 1. Note several lessons. Recognize the approaches.

- 1) There are two approaches to righteousness: the separatist approach of John and the sociable approach of Jesus. The majority of people reject both approaches. They are as children at play, fault-finders who cannot be pleased.
 - a) Some are playful. They are having a good time and do not want to be interrupted and bothered. They want to go on doing their own thing.

- b) Some are mindless and thoughtless. They do not think about the reason and logic behind God's glorious plan in the Messiah. They refuse to face the reality of truth: the evil, sin and depravity of the world and the existence of a personal God and the desperate need for Him to save the world.
 - c) Some are contrary. Their minds are made up. They are not going to listen to any other view. They have their own thoughts about the world and morality, and they are comfortable living as they wish. Therefore, they stubbornly reject any other view no matter the reasonableness of what was presented.
- 2) Most people reject any attempt to restrict their own play. They wish to continue doing their own thing — whether it be seeking pleasure, intellectual pursuit, secular interest or religious commitment. Most are willing to go only so far in restricting their own desires, will, and way. Few are willing to deny self completely (See *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23).
 - 3) God clearly used both approaches to righteousness (1 Cor. 12:6-7). Jesus did not condemn John's approach, and John did not condemn Jesus' approach. They supported each other. What a lesson for believers! There is no room for a judgemental spirit. Men have different temperaments and need to be approached by different methods (See Rom. 14:1-23).

LUKE 09:23 CROSS AND DISCIPLESHIP

*Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." **Luke 09:23***

People in Jesus' day knew what it meant to "take up" a cross. They saw scores of criminals bear the cross to the place where they were to be executed, and they witnessed scores of crucifixions, some even by the side of the roads that led in and out of the cities.

The cross does not mean merely bearing one's particular hardship in life, such as poor health, abuse, unemployment, invalid parents, an unsaved spouse, a wayward child. The cross is always an instrument of death, not just an object to carry or bear. The Christian is to die mentally and actively. He is to deny himself daily. He is to let the mind of Christ, the mind of humbling himself to the point of death, be in him and fill his thoughts every day (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). He is to put his will, his desires, his wants, his ambitions to death. In their stead, he is to follow Jesus and to do His will all day long. Note this is not negative, passive behaviour. It takes positive, active behaviour to *will*, to *deny self*, to *take up* one's *cross*, to *follow* Christ. A person has to act, work, get to it, be diligent, consistent, and enduring in order to die to self.

There are several ways the believer dies to self. Romans 6:11-13 spells out the ways as clearly as they can be.

Rom 6:11-13 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. (see Rom. 6:2-10)*

1. The believer reckons or counts himself crucified with Christ.

Rom 6:11a *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin.*

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Gal 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

2. The believer reckons or counts himself dead to sin, but alive to God.

Rom 6:11 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

1 Pet 4:2 *As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

3. The believer does not let sin reign in his body.

Rom 6:12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

Col 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

4. The believer does not yield the parts of his body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.

Rom 6:13a *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

5. The believer yields himself to God — as much as those who are alive from the dead are yielded to God.

Rom 6:13b *But rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life.*

Rom 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

6. The believer yields his body members as instruments of righteousness.

Rom 6:13c *And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

Gal 5:16 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

It should be noted that one's hardship or burden can bring a person to the place where the Lord can deal with him. It is then that the hardship becomes the cross and denial of self that Jesus is talking about. With an act of self-denial, the Christian can then count or reckon himself alive to God (Rom. 6:13). He can then follow Jesus. This is an act which can be described as committing all that one is and has to Christ. It is an act that needs to be repeated every day (see Mt. 10:38). □

II. *Mathew 11:20–24 The Judgment*

There is the judgment of this generation.

1. There is the judgment of two privileged cities, Korazin and Bethsaida (See *Korazin, Bethsaida*, Mt. 11:20-22). Note why they were judged.
 - a. They were privileged to have the gospel available. They had the presence of Christ, of believers and of the gospel. Such exposure condemns a person if he does not respond. Why? Because he has the opportunity to know Christ.
 - b. They refused to repent. A person who continues to live as he wills and refuses to turn to God condemns himself. God demands repentance.
 - c. They ignored and neglected Christ. Even in Jesus' day, most people paid no attention to Him. Note: judgment is to be based not only upon doing wrong but upon not doing right. Just sitting around doing nothing [no gross or public sin] does not free a person from judgment. God expects commitment and diligence in serving Christ.
 - d. The degree of judgment for the two cities is to be greater than for most. The judgment upon the two cities will be much greater than for Tyre and Sidon. Tyre and Sidon never had the opportunity of Christ's ministry. Korazin and Bethsaida did, and they *neglected and rejected* Christ. Therefore their judgment shall be much more severe.

2. There is the judgment of the most privileged city, Capernaum. The degree of judgment upon Capernaum is to be even greater than the judgment upon Sodom. Why? Because it was the very centre of the Lord's ministry and the people still neglected and rejected Christ.

Mark 8:38 *"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."*

John 3:19 *This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*

Acts 3:14 *You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you.*

2 Th 1:7-8 *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

2 Pet 2:1 *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

1 John 2:22 *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist — he denies the Father and the Son.*

Thought 1. Note four lessons.

- 1) There is to be a day of judgment, and Christ says there are to be degrees of judgment. Some judgment is to be more "unbearable" than other judgments. Note two things.
 - => There are degrees of privilege. There is much more witness for Christ in some areas than in others.
 - => People who live in these areas are much more privileged and will be held much more accountable than people who had less witness.
 - => There are degrees of judgment. Our response to the message of Christ determines how severely we will be judged.

Luke 12:48 *"But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."*

Rom 2:5 *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.*

- 2) Severe judgment will fall upon all who have had the opportunity to receive Christ but did not.
- 3) Our eternal state is determined by our response to Jesus Christ, and our state cannot be altered. The doom of Tyre and Sidon could not be altered, neither could the doom of Sodom. Their doom was set, having been determined while they were on earth. But note: Sodom will answer for much in the day of judgment but not for having neglected Christ. How much greater shall our judgment be because we have neglected and rejected Christ!
- 4) God forgives sin no matter how terrible. The sins of Sodom would have been forgiven if the people had repented. Judgment can be averted and escaped by repentance of sin.

MATHEW 11:20–22 KORAZIN AND BETHSAIDA

Jesus did many “miracles” or works in these cities, yet there is no record of the miracles or works. We must always remember that what we have in the New Testament are only a small number of the miracles and works that Christ did. As John says, “Jesus did many other things as well. If everyone of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (Jn. 21:25). □

MATHEW 11:23 CAPERNAUM

This was the headquarters of Christ from where He launched His ministry. □

MATHEW 11:23 SODOM

Note four things about Sodom in the Bible.

1. Sodom is a symbol of the depth of sin and judgment.
2. Sodom could have been forgiven its sin if the people had repented.
3. Sodom was judged and destroyed because of sin. It would not have been destroyed if its people had repented.
4. Sodom and its people will answer for much in the day of judgment, but not for having neglected and rejected Christ. □

III. *Mathew 11:25–27 Blindness of a Generation*

The blindness of this generation. The generation was blind to three things.

1. The people were blind to God’s truth. Note the words, “these things,” that is, the truth of Christ that the cities missed (See *Truth*, Mt. 11:25-27).

2. The people were blind to God's will, to His purpose. God has purposed to save the world through His Son, Jesus Christ. He has also purposed that the wise (the wise in their own eyes, the self-sufficient) shall not see the truth, but the babe (the needful) will have the truth revealed to him.

2 Cor 3:14 *"But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away."*

2 Cor 4:4 *"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."*

Eph 4:18 *"They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts."*

3. The people were blind to the Messiah. Note: man is blind to four facts about the Messiah:
 - a. Man is blind to the fact that Jesus Christ is of God. But note: Christ declares emphatically that He is of God. He calls God "My Father."
 - b. Man is blind to the fact that Jesus Christ has received all things from God. But note: Christ declares emphatically that He has been given "all things" by God. *All things have been delivered* into the hands of Christ. He is to oversee and rule the universe. All things have been made for God's Son.

Mat 28:18 *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

John 5:37 *"And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form."*

Eph 1:22 *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.*

Col 1:16-19 *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the first-born from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.*

Heb 1:1-3 *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

- c. Man is blind to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Mediator. But note: Christ declares emphatically that He is the Mediator. He alone *knows* and is *known* by the Father.

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Acts 4:12 *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*

1 Tim 2:5 *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

Heb 7:25 *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

- d. Man is blind to the fact that Jesus Christ alone can reveal the Father. But note: Christ declares emphatically that He alone reveals the Father. No man can know God apart from Christ. A person who wishes to see God and to see what God is like must come to Jesus Christ.

John 10:30 *"I and the Father are one."*

John 10:38 *"But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."*

John 12:49 *"For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it."*

John 14:9-10 *Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work." ■*

MATHEW 11:25–27 TRUTH, WORLD OF WISDOM

Spiritual truth is "hidden." Where? In God. God has done the logical thing. He has taken spiritual truth and locked it up in Himself. The only access to truth is to come to Him. The only key to spiritual truth is faith and trust in God.

It is reasonable. The man who considers himself wise and intelligent and sufficient enough without God never comes to God. Therefore, a personal relationship with God is never known. The man does not come to know God nor the spiritual truth "hidden" in God (Rom. 1:18-22). God and His presence and His plan for the ages are foreign to the self-sufficient man. The "wise" just do not believe God, not enough to come to Him. Therefore, the things of the Spirit and of the gospel are hid from him. But God's heart and truths are open to the person who comes in dependency and trust.

What Christ condemns is not intelligence and wisdom but intellectual pride and self-sufficiency. God made man to think, reason, seek and search in order to discover and build. But God expects man “not to think of himself more highly than he ought” (Rom. 12:3; cp. Phil. 2:3-4). A man is to walk humbly during his short stay on earth, knowing from whom he has come and to whom he is going. He is to trust God, putting his time and destiny in God’s hands.

Phil 2:3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. □

MATHEW 11:25 THE WISE

Those who think of themselves as wise and intelligent; the self-sufficient; the rationalists; the wise of this world (1 Cor. 1:21, 25-29; 2:14). The wise are blind to the Lord of heaven and earth and to the truth. By their very nature, the proud and self-sufficient sense no need for help and refuse to receive help. They rest in their own ability and achievements. Therefore, God is helpless in revealing the truth to them. □