

The Seen and the Unseen War

Matthew 11: 12.

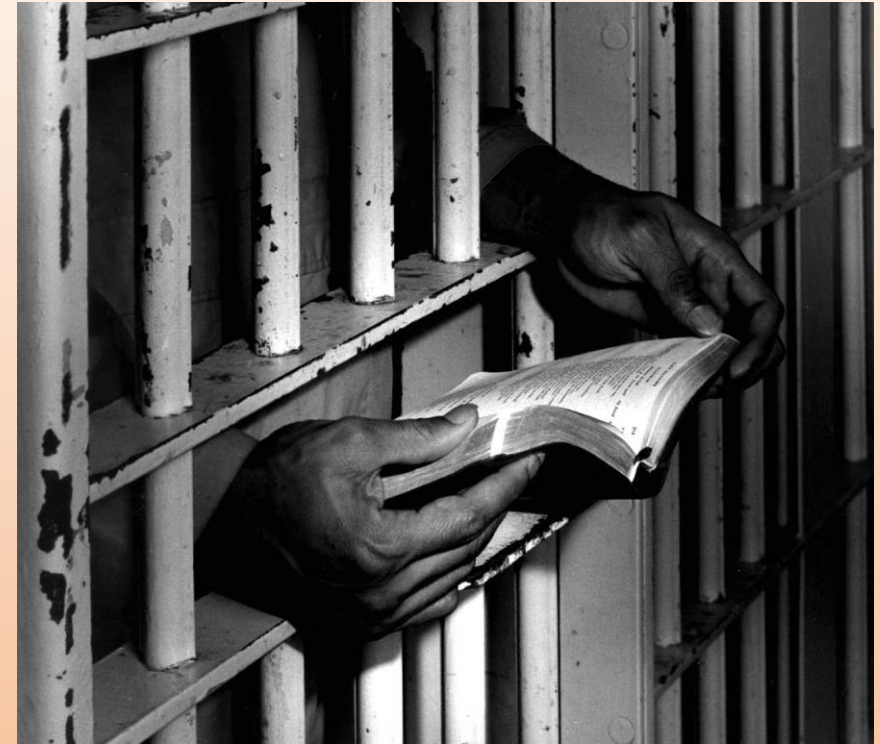


“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.”
Matthew 11: 12.



I. Introduction: PERSECUTION

The kingdom of God, during the Great Controversy, was always facing enemies and strong opposition. The reason is simple: true love is so costly, requiring self denial and a permanent mindset of sacrificial service. Thus, Christ followers were facing violent opposition since John the Baptist. However, inspired by their leader, they became the message of love in a world of turmoil, despite the persecution.

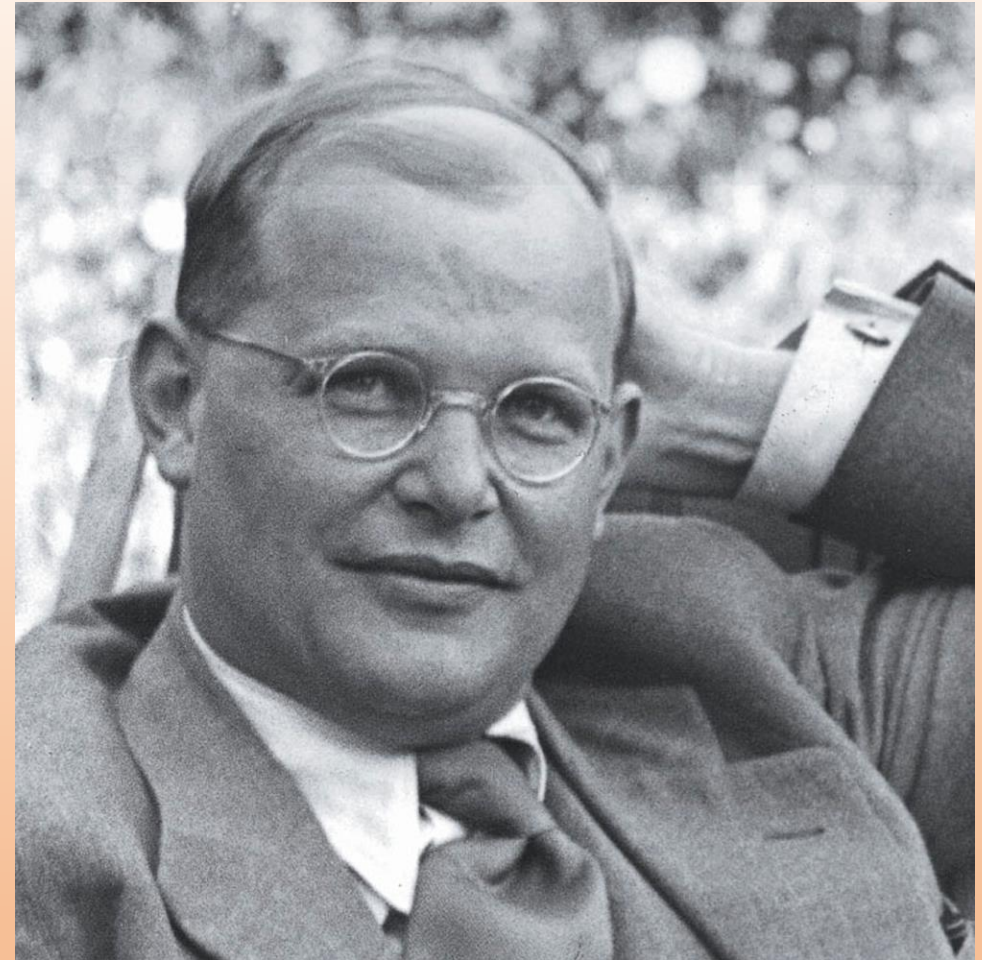


“Persecution is one of the natural consequences of living the Christian life. It is to the Christian what “growing pains” are to the growing child. No pain, no development. No suffering, no glory. No struggle, no victory. No persecution, no reward!”
Billy Graham



“When Christ calls a man, he bids him
come and die.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of
Discipleship*

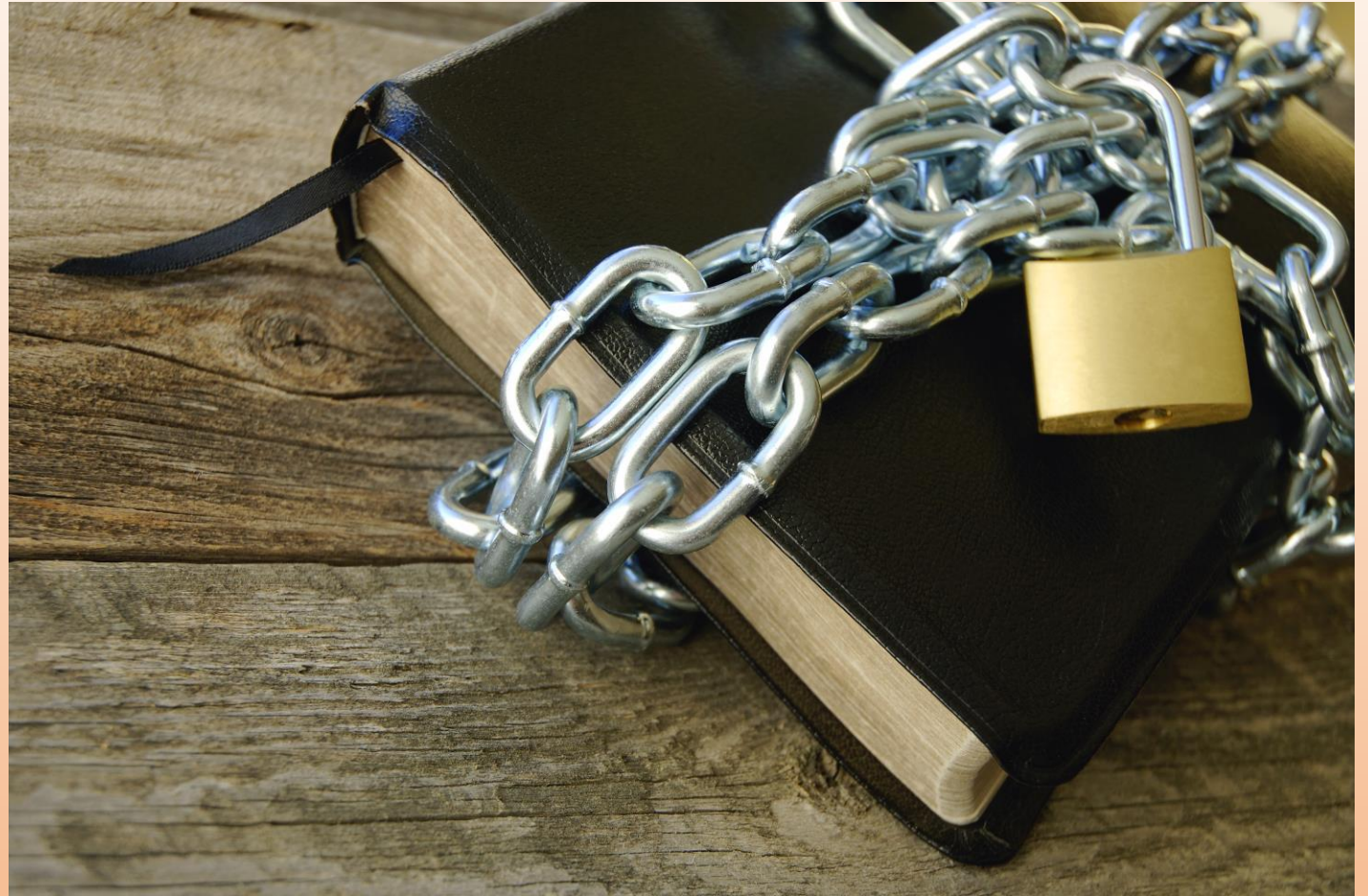


“Let us not forget: we are a pilgrim church, subject to misunderstanding, to persecution, but a church that walks serene, because it bears the force of love.”
Oscar A. Romero,
The Violence of Love



“The idea that truth always triumphs over persecution is one of those pleasant falsehoods, which most experience refutes. History is teeming with instances of truth put down by persecution. If not put down forever, it may be set back for centuries.”

John Stuart Mill



“If the Tiber rises too high, or the Nile too low, the remedy is always feeding Christians to the lions.”
Church Father Tertullian



“Religious persecution may shield itself
under the guise of a mistaken and over-
zealous piety.”

Edmund Burke



“I believe that pluralistic secularism, in the long run, is a more deadly poison than straightforward persecution.”
Francis Schaeffer



SACRED
SECULAR

2015-06-02

EACH MONTH

322 CHRISTIANS ARE
KILLED FOR THEIR FAITH



214 CHURCHES AND
CHRISTIAN **PROPERTIES**
ARE DESTROYED



772 FORMS OF **VIOLENCE**
ARE COMMITTED AGAINST
CHRISTIANS *(SUCH AS BEATINGS, ABDUCTIONS,
RAPES, ARRESTS AND FORCED MARRIAGES)*



Ten Christians killed every day
7 churches are destroyed every day
25 forms of violence every day

II. Context



Our text (John 11: 1 – 19) is essentially written with the intent to uplift the ministry of John. This is Jesus' encouragement to His friend who is unjustly imprisoned by Herod. At the same time, the speech of Jesus is confirming that the rejection of John is just the consequence of the entire generation and its intrinsic characteristics: They are immature and similar to children, acting without seriousness.



Teaching Ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew

1

4: 23

TEACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS IN GALILEE

"Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people."

2

9: 35

TEACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES

"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness."

3

11: 1

TEACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS IN THEIR CITIES

"When Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities."

The Gospel of Matthew, Rejection of John and Jesus **11: 1 – 19. Structure**

INTRO	11: 1	TEACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS
A	11: 2 – 3	DEEDS OF JESUS. DOUBT OF JOHN ABOUT THE MINISTRY OF JESUS
B	11: 4 – 6	BLESSING FOR THOSE WHO DON'T REJECT JESUS
C	11: 7 – 15	JESUS TEACHING ABOUT THE MINISTRY OF JOHN
		a. External Fragility of John
		b. External Appearance of John
		c. John, More than a Prophet
		d. John, My Messenger
		e. No One Greater than John the Baptist
		f. New Era: From John the Baptist Until Now
		g. Law and Prophets Until John
		h. John is Elijah Who is to Come
B'	11: 16 – 17	GENERATION OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FRIENDS REJECTING JOHN AND JESUS
A'	11: 18 – 19	DEEDS OF WISDOM. REJECTION OF THE MINISTRY OF JOHN AND JESUS

John is affirmed by Jesus as God's Messenger. This is a reminder for those who live before the second coming of Jesus that they also have a special role: to prepare the way of the Lord.



Gradual increase of the impact of Jesus' Ministry of Healing

1	8: 4	A Secret Healing, without Publicity "See that you tell no one"
2	8: 34	Rejection of Jesus "And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region"
3	9: 8	Giving Glory to God "Now when the multitude saw it, they marveled and glorified God"
4	9: 26	Report into all that land "And the report of this went out into all that country"
5	9: 31	Report in all the Country "They spread the news about Him in all that country"
6	9: 33. 34.	Division among the multitude: Pharisees rejects Jesus "But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons"
2	9: 35	The Public Ministry of Jesus in all Cities and Villages "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages"

Five Speeches in the Gospel of Matthew and Five Books of Moses

The Meaning of the Law

The Torah Revisited

The Book of DEUTERONOMY

The New Meaning of the Law

The Spirit of the Law re-explained

The New DEUTERONOMY

Matthew
Ch. 5 – 7

Organization, Leadership

Moses sends 12 spies to explore the land

The Book of Numbers

Discipleship, Leadership

Jesus sends 12 disciples to transform the land

The New Numbers

Matthew
Ch. 10

The Great Controversy (GC)

The worship, the Atonement, GC (ch.16)

The Book of Leviticus

The Great Controversy (GC)

The Parable of the Tares and GC (36-52)

The New Leviticus

Matthew
Ch. 13

The Birth of God's People

Children of Israel coming out of Egypt

The Book of Exodus

The Church, new people of God

Children entering God's kingdom

The New Exodus

Matthew
Ch. 18

Creation, our Origins

Garden of Eden, God's plan for this Planet

The Book of Genesis

New Kingdom, Our Destiny

New Garden of Eden, God's plan for this Planet

The New Genesis

Matthew
Ch. 23-25

Five Speeches in the Gospel of Matthew

Speech #1 (Chapters 5 – 7)

The New Meaning of the Law (DEUTERONOMY)

Jesus' explanation of the Spirit of the Law, underlining the beauty of God's Revelation on Sinai

Speech #2 (Chapter 10)

The New Concept of Discipleship (NUMBERS)

The role of twelve disciples, their authority, and their mission. The new way of conceiving leadership.

Speech #3 (Chapter 13)

The New Vision of God's Kingdom (LEVITICUS)

God's plans for the triumph of His concept of love in the context of the Great Controversy

Speech #4 (Chapter 18)

The New Call to Come Out and to be Part of God's people (Exodus)

God's church (Ecclesia in Greek, which means "called out or forth").

Speech #5 (Chapter 23-25)

The New Presentation of God's Kingdom (Genesis)

After a long conflict, Jesus presents a place where we can live with God forever.

III. The kingdom of God is for those who surrender all and give everything to Jesus. They become the heroes of the Good News of Salvation, without being afraid of consequences



1. John the Baptist represents a new period in the history of the Great Controversy

“From the days of John
the Baptist until now”



“John the Baptist is the New Testament forerunner who points the way to the arrival of the Lord, just as Elijah filled that role in the Old Testament.”
Elmer Towns



“There are a couple of things worth noting here that inform the New Testament use of the passage of Malachi ch. 3. First, Jesus changed the pronoun from “me” to “you.” In the oracle in Malachi if you read the whole paragraph, verses 1-5, you will see that the speaker is Yahweh – God Himself. He is sending the messenger before Himself, because according to verse 5 He will come in judgment. The great event was the coming of the Yahweh; and the announcement of it would be through the messenger. Jesus wanted His audience to be clear on that point, and so by changing the pronoun in His use of the verse He affirms that if John the Baptist was the messenger preparing the way for the Yahweh, then He, Jesus, is Yahweh in the flesh, the God of Israel who was coming into the world.”

Allen Ross

“Though some might put John in a bad light because of his seeming doubts regarding Jesus, Jesus Himself spoke quite highly of John. "John had often borne witness to Jesus; now Jesus bears witness of John." John was steady, not shaken easily like a reed.

- John was sober, in that he lived a disciplined life, not in love with the luxuries and comforts of this world.
- John was a servant, a prophet of God.
- John was sent, as the special messenger of the Lord.
- John was special, in that he could be considered the greatest under the Old Covenant.
- John was second to even the least in the kingdom under the New Covenant.”

David Guzik

“Repent, repent, was the message rung out by John the Baptist in the wilderness. Christ’s message to the people was, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Luke 13:5. And the apostles were commanded to preach everywhere that men should repent. The Lord desires His servants today to preach the old gospel doctrine, sorrow for sin, repentance, and confession. We want old-fashioned sermons, old-fashioned customs, old-fashioned fathers and mothers in Israel.”
Ellen G. White, Undated Manuscript #111.

“The Law and the Prophets represented the revelation of God to His children before the coming of Christ. Their role was to prepare people for the ministry of the Messiah. According to the words of Jesus nothing changed in their content. But after the coming of Jesus the Old Testament writings had a different role. They were showing how to use in the best way possible the benefits of the salvation in Jesus Christ.”
(DS)



2. The kingdom of heaven is under the attacks of the enemy

“The kingdom of heaven
suffers violence”



The difficulty of this text is that the word related to violence is first presented as a verb 'BIAZO', and then as a noun 'BIASTES'. Therefore, the first mention of violence is about the kingdom, and the second is describing individuals who want to enter into it.



The form of biazo (from which suffers violence comes) can be read as either a Greek passive or middle voice. As a passive, it would carry the idea of being oppressed or treated violently, which would indicate that violence is brought on the kingdom of heaven by those outside of it. The Pharisees and scribes had attacked John verbally, and Herod had attacked him physically. The kingdom was being violently denied and rejected... Soon the enemies of the kingdom would kill not only John but even the Messiah Himself. They would destroy both the herald and the King."

John MacArthur

“Wherever the Gospel is preached there will be trouble. If the trouble ever ceases, we know that the Gospel is not being preached and the church has become a quaint relic of the past... Maybe some of you will face persecution. Perhaps some already have. But God is on your side. Your salvation is secure, and God will not let you fall... In the meantime, where are the true heirs of the Reformation? Where are those who, forgiven in Christ and lavished with grace, speak boldly and unwaveringly to a hostile world?”

Pastor Daniel Hinton



"It sounds as if Matthew was saying: 'From the days of John, who was thrown into prison, right down to our own times the Kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and persecution at the hands of violent men'... What Jesus may well have said is: 'Always my Kingdom will suffer violence.'"

Valeriy Gromov



3. It is important
to invest all
necessary energies
in order to enter
into the kingdom
of heaven

“And the violent take it
by force.”



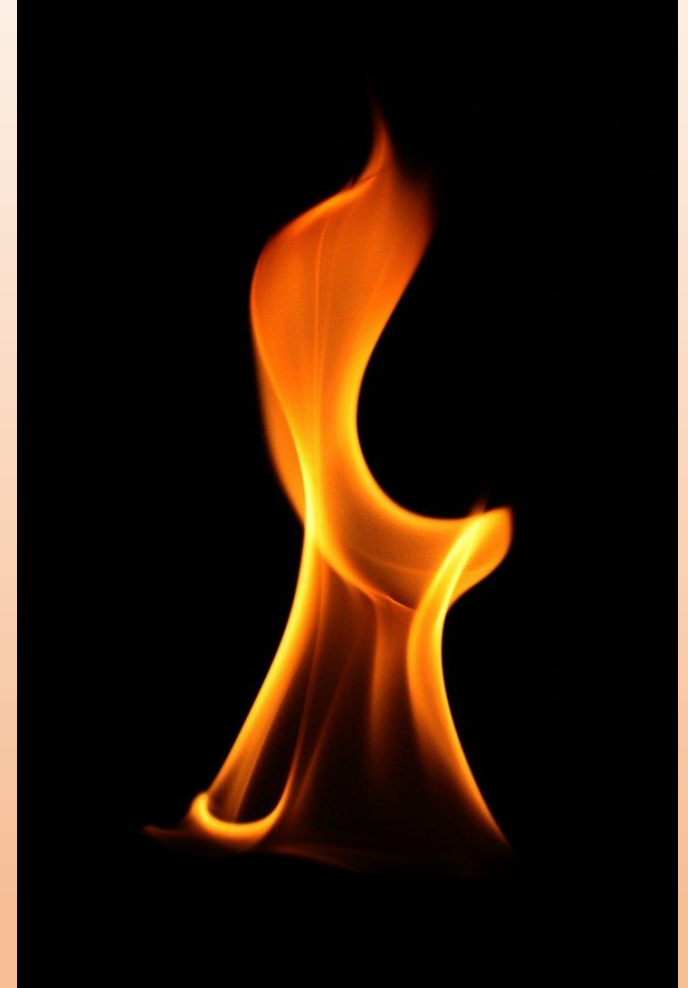
"People have been “earnest” about it; they have come “pressing” to obtain the blessing, as if they would take it by violence... With such “EARNESTNESS”... He says, people had pressed around Him and John since they began to preach.”
Albert Barnes



“A deep sense of our need and a great desire for the things for which we ask must characterize our prayers, else they will not be heard. But we are not to become weary and cease our petitions because the answer is not immediately received. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12). The violence here meant is a holy earnestness, such as Jacob manifested. We need not try to work ourselves up into an intense feeling, but calmly, persistently, we are to press our petitions at the throne of grace. Our work is to humble our souls before God, confessing our sins, and in faith drawing nigh unto God.... It is the design of God to reveal Himself in His providence and in His grace. The object of our prayers must be the glory of God, not the glorification of ourselves...

Ellen G. White, *That I may know Him*, p. 272.

“Those strove for a place in this kingdom, that one would think had no right nor title to it, and so seemed to be intruders. It shows us what FERVENCY AND ZEAL are required of all.”
Matthew Henry



“From the time he began his preaching ministry, John the Baptist evoked a strong reaction. Having been imprisoned already, John ultimately fell victim to Herod’s savagery. But the kingdom can never be subdued or opposed by human violence. Notice that where Matthew says, “the violent take it by force,” Luke has, “everyone is pressing into it” (Luke 16:16). So the sense of this verse may be rendered this way: (The kingdom presses ahead relentlessly, and only the relentless press their way into it.” Thus again Christ is magnifying the difficulty of entering the kingdom...”

John MacArthur

“The spirits of men are so excited and animated by a desire after this kingdom, that it is, as it were, attacked like a besieged city, men of all sorts pressing to get into it, with a violence like that of men who are taking a place by storm. As if he had said, “Multitudes are flocking around me, to be instructed in the nature of my kingdom; and some, who were formerly of most licentious characters, and looked upon as utterly unfit to be subjects of the Messiah’s kingdom, are resolutely set on enjoying the blessings of it.” *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear* — A kind of proverbial expression, requiring the deepest attention to what is spoken.”
Joseph Benson

V. Conclusion



“It has been much disputed whether the “violence” here is external, as against the kingdom in the persons of John the Baptist and Jesus; or that, considering the opposition of the scribes and Pharisees, only the violently resolute would press into it. Both things are true. The King and His herald suffered violence, and this is the primary and greater meaning, but also, some were resolutely becoming disciples.”

Scofield Reference Notes



“The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” Matthew 11:12. What an encouragement to every soul! When, armed with the promises of God, you come to the Father in the name of Jesus, the Great Intercessor is seen by faith, standing at the altar of incense and having in His hand the golden censer. You hear His voice saying, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” John 14:16. What hope will fill your poor discouraged heart! What shame and remorse will you feel for your cherished unbelief.”

Ellen G. White, Material 1888, p. 868.

“God does not promise us ease, honor, or wealth in his service, but he assures us that all needed blessings will be ours, “with persecutions,” and in the world to come “life everlasting.” Nothing less than entire consecration to his service will Christ accept. This is the lesson which every one of us must learn.”

Ellen G. White, Christian Education, p. 240.



The Seen and the Unseen War

Matthew 11: 12.

