

A cinematic photograph of a biblical scene. In the foreground, a man with a long beard and hair, wearing a brown, fur-lined tunic and a brown sash, stands waist-deep in a river. He is gesturing with his right hand towards a group of men on the bank. The men on the bank are dressed in white and black robes with head coverings. One man in the foreground is leaning against a large tree trunk, holding a wooden staff. The background shows a riverbank with more people and a hilly landscape under a bright sky.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD SUFFERS VIOLENCE

ADRIAN EBENS



Adrian Ebens, February 2026
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THE KINGDOM OF GOD SUFFERS VIOLENCE

Opening Prayer:

Dear Father in heaven, it's such a joy to come to you in the midweek and to kneel before you in the Spirit of our Lord Jesus. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you are the way to the Father, and we present our petitions to you for clarity, for understanding. Continue to solidify us in the truths of Scripture, that we may be sealed with the Father's name, and that we will dwell with you forever and ever.

I pray for everyone listening and that you would bless them. I think particularly of Franz Schubert at this time with the operation he's just had, and I think of the Lorraine Beddie's family. We have a funeral tomorrow, and we just pray for the whole family there.

Guide us now as we spend this time; in Jesus' name. Amen.

Presentation:

This presentation is called *The Kingdom of God Suffers Violence*. And for those of you who are Bible students, you will know that this refers to a passage of Scripture, which we will get to. But for now, we're going to do a little bit of revision on where we've been, and also a lead-up on the subject of the kingdom of God. So, it's interesting when we read in the beginning of Matthew, both John the Baptist and Jesus begin to preach the kingdom of God is near. It says here,

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:1-2)

"At hand" – It's near, it's approaching.

And Jesus preaching exactly the same thing:

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

So, we look at a few more texts. It's interesting that in the same chapter, Matthew 4:23, it says,

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom,...**

So, the gospel of the kingdom, the good news of the kingdom, means that the kingdom is the good news of what that kingdom is.

...and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. (Matthew 4:23)

And I've written a comment here, that healing the sickness and disease also applies to our minds. And of course, the sickness we experience in our bodies comes from the sicknesses that we are experiencing in our minds, from the wrong understandings that we have of God and life, and how life should operate. And you'll remember in our last presentation, where Jesus says about the kingdom,

"nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

It's a kingdom of character. And the good news, or the gospel of the kingdom, is the preaching of the character, the loving character of our Father. And it is good news. It should cause repentance for us as human beings because we've been under a different kingdom, and we've operated in a different system of justice and punishment system. So, when the kingdom of God comes, there has to be a repentance process to say, "Oh, we've lived completely wrongly. We need to repent of the way we've been thinking and come into this kingdom." So, the kingdom itself is a kingdom of character, and that character is the character of our Father. And that character is the gospel.

It's interesting, when I was studying, and this is now in the book of Mark, early in the book of Mark, when Jesus was wanting to tell them about the kingdom of heaven, notice what He says in Mark 4:30

Then He said, "**To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it?**" (Mark 4:30)

And Ellen White makes this comment; she says,

"Whereunto," asked Christ, "shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?" Mark 4:30. He could not employ the kingdoms of the world as a similitude.

And we would say, yes, that's true. He couldn't use Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, or Rome. But it goes deeper than that, because she says,

In society He found nothing with which to compare it. (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 12.2)

And this confirms what we were saying in our last presentation, that if Israel was actually in the kingdom of God, He could use the society of Israel as an illustration of the kingdom of God. But He had nothing to compare it with, because Israel did not understand the character of God, and therefore they did not understand the gospel. So, Jesus had nothing with which He could compare it, in society. And He had to draw from nature and the things that He and His Father had created to draw illustrations of what the kingdom of God is like. So, I found that interesting.

And notice what it says here that Israel, of course, was lost in understanding. And again, in Matthew 10, Jesus says, or it says of Jesus,

These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. **But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**

And that tells us that those in Israel were lost. They were sheep that were lost and they were lost because they didn't understand the character of God.

And as you go, preach, saying, '**The kingdom of heaven is at hand.**' [It's near, it's approaching] Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." (Matthew 10:5-8)

Cast out the demon of false justice, raise those that are dead in trespasses and sins. This is not only talking of physical things, it's talking of spiritual things. Heal those that are sick in their minds, in their understanding, sick in the need for pride, jealousy, and selfishness. They are full of leprosy, of selfishness and sin. Purge out the old lump with its leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:8. And so, Israel was lost in their understanding.

And of course, we go to the book of Isaiah where it says,

All of us like sheep have wandered, Each to his own way we have turned, And Jehovah hath caused to meet on him, The punishment of us all. (Isaiah 53:6, YLT)

As we've talked about in the book of *At-one-ment*, in other places, the punishment of us all is our punishment on Christ. And this is what causes us to wander away as sheep because we misunderstand God's character because of accepting Satan's false justice system. As we read in *The Desire of Ages*, page 761, paragraph 4, "every sin must be punished, urged Satan."

Again, we read the sad words,

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, **and the world did not know Him.** [But not only did the world know him not, but as it says here,] **He came to His own,** [Those who had the oracles, those that received the Torah] **and His own did not receive Him.** (John 1:10-11)

They did not recognize Him. He was not what they thought. They had a wrong understanding. And this is why Jesus couldn't point to Israel as an example of the kingdom of God, because it wasn't an example of the kingdom of God. It had many of the elements that were there in the Torah, but the way they were put together by Israel, it was not the kingdom of God. So, we remember that Jesus says His kingdom is not of this world, which means that obviously Israel, which was in the world, was still not reflecting his kingdom.

Jesus answered, **"My kingdom is not of this world.** If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; **but now My kingdom is not from here."** (John 18:36)

This means that there is no fighting with physical weapons in the kingdom of Christ.

But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its **place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.** Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:52-53)

These are two very important texts for the Father of Love Movement. We need to not forget this, that God's servants don't fight with physical weapons. As Paul says,

For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; (2 Corinthians 10:4, KJV)

So, we continue. Again, this is a very important passage for us. And we're reinforcing the principle that the kingdom itself was not manifested as it ought to be until Christ came. And we know this passage, *The Desire of Ages*, page 22.

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The earth was dark through misapprehension [or misunderstanding] of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, **Satan's deceptive power was to be broken.** This could not be done by force.

This is an important point. No force can be employed.

The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded;...

God cannot say, you will obey me or I will destroy you. This is not God's kingdom. And yet, many of the prophets of the past had essentially framed things in this language: "Repent or die.!" This does not represent the kingdom of God, not in that context. It is an old wineskin.

...it cannot be won by force or authority.

God displaying His power, God flexing His muscle and indicating to us that if we do not submit, that it will not go well with us. This is not part of God's kingdom.

Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; **His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan.**

And therefore, simple deductions, simple logic: if God's character is in contrast to that of Satan, therefore, there is nothing in God's character that is like Satan. And because we know that Satan kills people, by definition, we know that God must not. But He lives according to His own commandments, which says "Thou shalt not kill." And then it says,

This work only one Being in all the universe could do.

Noah couldn't do it. Abraham couldn't do it. Not even Moses could do it. Only one being in the universe,

Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of

Righteousness must rise, “with **healing in His wings.**” Malachi 4:2.
(*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.1)

And there we see the healing in the wings is the healing in the mind to a true understanding of God’s character. Only one being in the universe could do this work. There was no one else. Of course, Christ, through His Spirit, was working in the Old Testament. Therefore, there were opportunities for people in the Old Testament to comprehend the truth of God’s character. But it was largely kept hidden until Christ was manifest in the flesh.

Again, another important quote, part of this is on the Maranatha Media website. It’s another important passage for us.

It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. **Men are losing their knowledge of His character.**

And we would say, have men ever really known His character?

It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time [and she’s talking about, in these last days] **a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known.**

And I know that many of you that are listening can testify that this has been our experience, that we’ve been illuminated by the truth of God’s character. He has granted to us to know the justice of God, the mercy of God, the beauty of God. And all of this is laid down in the message of the prophets, in the message of Adventism, in the message of Ellen White. It’s such a thrill to know that we can have an assurance, a certainty that we have a correct understanding of our Father’s character.

Now notice what it says (*Christ’s Object Lessons*),

Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory [or character], the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth.

Important words: goodness, mercy, and truth. Now notice,

This is the work outlined by the prophet Isaiah in the words, “O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, ...

And this is the gospel. So here Ellen White is defining that the character of God, the truth of His character is the good news. It is the good tidings.

... lift up thy voice with strength; ...

We are called upon to lift up our voice. And I know that all of you, I pray for you all, us all, that we're able to lift up our voice. At the present time, there are so few who seem truly interested in knowing the truth of God's character, and it becomes discouraging. And some days we weep and we wonder why those close to us and those of our acquaintances, but so many seem to show no interest in looking at the beautiful character of our Father and it causes us grief. But let us take courage. Let us take heart that we can lift up our voices with strength, because we know our God, we know Him, we know who He is, and we are being transformed by beholding. We are being transformed into this beautiful image.

I was talking to our dear brother Daniel Bernhardt the other day, and I was telling him how that during the time that I had spent having a bit of a break, I was constantly thinking about the Cross that our Father and His Son suffer. And that when you know that your Father is in great pain, you cannot live for yourself. You cannot stop thinking about the fact that your Father is suffering. You cannot stop thinking about the fact that almost the whole world believe lies about His character and how painful that is for Him. And I find myself more and more saying, "Father, just help me to know what to do. And Lord Jesus, let me watch with you just for a little while in the morning and in the evening sacrifice just to be with you and to think of the great suffering that you're willing to endure so that we can have another day of life." How amazing has the Cross become for us in its present context?

And we all still are wrestling with unbelief. If I can say the scabs of unbelief, the sores that are beginning to heal, but we still have these scabs that show that we are still coming out of darkness. But we are going to. We are going to reveal the character of our Father. He is going

to put flesh on these bones and breathe His Spirit because we know what His Spirit is, who His Spirit is. And we will rise up as an army with banners because He has given us the kingdom in the beauty of His Son's character.

So, it says,

...lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

This is the gospel. What do you behold? That's partly why I wanted to play that song: "The hour of His judgment is come." How do you judge your Father? Is He truly benevolent? Is He truly merciful to the very end? Is He not a destroyer or is He a destroyer? Does He burn His children to ashes with His own hand or not? This is the judgment we are engaged in right now. His reward is with Him. And what is His reward? His reward is His character.

As God said to Abraham, I am your exceeding great reward. Genesis 15:1. What a reward is that; to have His character? I want nothing more than to have His character. This is the greatest treasure that we could ever ask for.

Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." Isaiah 40:9, 10.

Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, "Behold your God."

And this is what we are called to do. "Behold your God." Our God is just like Jesus when He was here on earth. He is meek and mild, did no violence, neither was guile found in His mouth. Gentle as a lamb, as a dove. This is our God. Then it says,

The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 415.3-5)

And this is why our dear brother Kevin Mullins' website is called "Last Message of Mercy." It's connected to this statement. There is a message of mercy to be given to the world. And what a privilege you and I have been given to be a part of this message. Some of us may feel like we can't do much, but simply knowing the truth and being able to pray and to find opportunities, a book here, a card there, a web link here or there, a prayer for someone, little by little this message is going to advance.

Now, this is very interesting because we talked about John the Baptist before. We've mentioned him a number of times, particularly in *The Desire of Ages*, p. 215, where Ellen White says, and I quote this a little bit later, he didn't understand the character of God.

Now, notice, and I don't know if you've thought of this, but how he speaks of his relationship to Christ, the Messiah. Notice what he says in the book of John.

So John's disciples came to him [to John] and said, "Rabbi, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the One you identified as the Messiah, is also baptizing people. And everybody is going to Him instead of coming to us."

A little bit of jealousy; always happens amongst human beings.

John replied, "No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. **You yourselves know how plainly I told you, 'I am not the Messiah. [and notice what he says] I am only here to prepare the way for Him.'**

And then he says something interesting.

It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the best man is simply glad to stand with him...

And he doesn't identify himself as part of the bride, but he identifies himself as the 'best man' who stands with Him. And that has puzzled me, but in the light of God's character, it makes much more sense, because a 'best man' is a witness to the marriage. And John the Baptist was a witness to the truth that Christ is the Messiah. He was a witness

that “this is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world”. And he prepared the way for the Messiah. But his whole ministry had been framed in a different context from Jesus’ actual character. And this is why I believe John says what he says next. It says,

and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at His success. **He must become greater and greater** [or he must increase, as it says in the King James version], **and I must become less and less.**
(John 3:26-30, NLT)

Now, if John was in the kingdom, he would say, “as Christ becomes greater, I will become in His train greater with Him.” But he presents an inverse relationship that Christ is increasing and he is decreasing. And of course, we are talking about, we can reference this in terms of our natural person is decreasing and Christ in us is increasing. You can present it in that light. But that’s still the point, is that if John must decrease, and he’s talking about his ministry, that his ministry must decrease, because it was framed, as it says in *The Desire of Ages*, p. 215, or even in the Gospels, the axe is laid at the root of the tree and you’re going to be cut out if you do not repent. There was an element of violence in his message. There was an element of threat in the message that John the Baptist gave. And this is why he must decrease and why Christ must increase.

How can John become less unless his understanding was not in complete harmony with the kingdom. He had to become less because of his misunderstanding.

And I want to continue in this theme because it gets more interesting. Yes, here’s the quote. And first, we read Matthew 11:11, because we looked at this in the last presentation.

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding **he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**
(Matthew 11:11, KJV)

And I made a statement that if this is true, then it must be that John the Baptist was not in the kingdom at this point. And here we have the confirmation in *The Desire of Ages*, p. 215, paragraph 2.

Like the Saviour's disciples, **John the Baptist did not understand the nature [character] of Christ's kingdom.** He expected Jesus to take the throne of David; and as time passed, and the Saviour made no claim to kingly authority, John became perplexed and troubled. He had declared to the people that in order for the way to be prepared before the Lord, the prophecy of Isaiah must be fulfilled; the mountains and hills must be brought low, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain.

And that shows if he didn't understand it, then he is not in it. He was not in the kingdom. He was bearing witness by saying, "This is the Christ. This is the Messiah." That was his work. He prepared the way. He brought the people to repentance and then he pointed them to the Messiah. This is what he was called to do. He was a 'best man' to the groom. He was a witness to the truth of who the groom is. But at this point, he was not part of the bride. He was not in the kingdom.

And as it says,

He had looked for the high places of human pride and power to be cast down. He had pointed to the Messiah as the One whose fan was in His hand, and who would thoroughly purge His floor, who would gather the wheat into His garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Here we see an element of force. Here we see an element of violence that is being expressed by John the Baptist. And then it says,

Like the prophet Elijah, in whose spirit and power he had come to Israel, he looked for the Lord to reveal Himself as a God that answereth by fire. (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 215.2)

And we remember in the book of Luke,

But they did not receive Him, because His face was *set* for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, **“Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?”** But He turned and rebuked them, and said, **“You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.”** (Luke 9:43-56)

It was a different spirit. But in this spirit, there was a testament to the truth of who the Messiah was. And this was the work that Elijah and John the Baptist did to prepare the way for Messiah to come that He might usher in the kingdom.

Now, we continue from Matthew 11. Now we come to the heart of this presentation.

“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Now, when we understand the truth of the character of God, we can now look at this statement and see that John at this point is not in the kingdom. And in that context, we can now look at the following verses, and we see something very interesting. It says,

And from the days of John the Baptist until now **the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.** [And then Jesus says] **For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.** And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matthew 11:11-15)

In this same context, in this context of violence. But because God’s character does not use force and does not use violence, therefore, the kingdom of heaven suffered violence from the very prophets that were bearing witness to the kingdom of God. This is a point we need to consider very carefully.

Online Audience: The kingdom of God does not advance by violence – it suffers violence – yet it overcomes through relentless love.

Pr. Adrian: This is the point that we want to make here. And what's interesting is that when you read the typical understanding of these verses, you get comments like this. This is from Adam Clark commenting on these verses.

The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence – The tax-gatherers and heathens, whom the scribes and Pharisees think have no right to the kingdom of the Messiah, filled with holy zeal and earnestness, seize at once on the proffered mercy of the Gospel, and so take the kingdom as by force ...

So, Adam Clark is presenting this text; and this is the way I've been taught it, this is the way I was told it; that those who are earnest and those that are pressing into the kingdom, notice he says take it "as by force." But Jesus didn't say "as by force." He said "take it by force."

... from those learned doctors who claimed for themselves the chiefest places in that kingdom. Christ himself said, The tax-gatherers and harlots go before you into the kingdom of God. (*Adam Clarke Commentary*)

That's Adam Clark. Even Ellen White has followed a similar line here when she says in *Life Sketches*,

In the beginning, the work goes hard and slow. Now is the time when all should bend their shoulders to raise the load and carry it forward. Advance we must, though the Red Sea be before us, and impassable mountains on either hand. God has been with us and has blessed our efforts. We must work by faith. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' Matthew 11:12. We are to pray, believe that our prayers are heard, and then work. (*Life Sketches*, p. 298.1)

And we can look at these verses in this way. But I'm suggesting that this is a surface understanding. It's not wrong, because we do need to be earnest, we do need to take hold, we do need to do all these things. It's not wrong what Ellen White is saying. But in the light of the character of God, we can now look at these texts in a different light.

Now, I just go back to Matthew 11, where it says “the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.” I looked at the Greek words, “take it by force.” And when we look at Matthew 11:12, it’s got these two Greek words there, [the first] which is to seize or to snatch or to take up. Then the second Greek word refers to him or the object that’s being described.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by **force**. [G726 G846] (Matthew 11:12)

Now, when we look at these two Greek words, I looked for these two words that were in verses in the New Testament. And notice the context. In Matthew 13, it says,

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and **snatches** [G726] away what was sown in **his** [G846] heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. (Matthew 13:19)

So those two words there, the snatching away, the taking away in that verse is in the negative context, that is a work that Satan does. In John 6:15,

Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and **take Him by force** [G726] [G846] to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone. (John 6:15)

Again, this is a negative context, not a positive. In John 10:12,

But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; **and the wolf catches** [G726] [G846] **the sheep** and scatters them. (John 10:12)

Again, this is a negative context. The use of force that is being applied here is in a negative context. In John 10:28,

And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone **snatch** [G726] [G846] them out of My hand. (John 10:28)

Again, not being able to do something, negative. These are the context for these words. And again, Acts 23:10,

Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and **take him by force** [G726] [G846] from among them, and bring *him* into the barracks. (Acts 23:10)

Now, the outcome here was a good outcome because they saved Paul's life, but to take him by force, take him and take him away. So, this is interesting.

There are a few places where this word is seen in a positive, but we notice the two Greek words are separated by other contexts.

Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord **caught** [G726] Philip away, so that the eunuch **saw him** [G846] no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:39)

So, the action of the first word and the second word are actually separated. It is a positive, but it's not the same as what we're looking at, where the two words are directly together. And in 1 Thessalonians 4:17,

Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be **caught [snatched]** [G726] up together **with them** [G846] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

So, it's not exactly the same as what's being described in Matthew 11:12. I'm just pointing out these two verses because some people might point these out. So, I wanted to get in first and say, yes, I'm aware of these verses, but looking at them, they are not directly side by side as they are in Matthew 11:12.

Therefore, the context for all of these verses, where it is a consistency of the action and the subject together, is all in the negative.

Online Audience: Some scholars understand “violent” metaphorically – meaning forceful, determined pursuit.

Pr. Adrian: That’s interesting, isn't it? Should we take the metaphorical meaning first, or following Miller’s rule, should we take the literal meaning first and only apply a metaphorical meaning if the literal meaning doesn’t fit? And I’m suggesting we can take a literal meaning here.

“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now **the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.** And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!
(Matthew 11:11-15)

Here we see, and this is the picture that I’m seeing here. He’s talking about John the Baptist, and “there’s none greater than him.” He then says, “but the one who is least in the kingdom is greater than he,” which means He’s just saying that John’s actually not fully in the kingdom. He’s actually outside at this present time. And in that context, He says, and from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. And why does it suffer violence? Because John the Baptist did have an element of violence in his message, of purging the floor, of burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire. This is not part of God’s kingdom. And yet, that’s why the kingdom of God was suffering violence, because there was a violent element in the message that John was presenting.

And then he says, “for all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” So, all the prophets have presented in their messages elements that still had this violent component in it. This is the way I’m understanding this now, and I’m presenting this to you. Yes, we can look at it metaphorically and take it to press earnestly into the kingdom, but when we take it literally and we look at the text step by step, we can see

that Jesus is actually saying, the kingdom that I'm presenting to you has suffered violence because it has been presented incorrectly by all of the prophets. They have presented it incorrectly.

Online Audience: Two gospels: gospel of the kingdom, pre-death and resurrection of Jesus; gospel of salvation saved by grace through faith.

Pr. Adrian: And I would add to that, that this gospel of God's character has been the same from the beginning. But it was, as Paul says in Romans 16:25, it was hidden until Christ actually came. So, I'm presenting something to you for your consideration in Matthew 11:11 to 15. These were verses that were hard for me to understand. Like, what does it mean the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force?

We have read that there is nothing forceful in God's kingdom. There is nothing forceful. So, for the violent to take it by force, as to try and come into God's kingdom using force, they're not actually fully in God's kingdom. That all the prophets have had this element in it, and that is why we had to wait until Christ came to fully reveal the character.

So, I hope that you will give this some consideration as to a different way to look at this as to why it is suffering violence. Because it says the kingdom is suffering violence. It is something that is done to the kingdom and that the violent take it by force. So, as I've written here,

The kingdom of heaven suffered violence in the preaching of all the prophets until John. This is because they preached a message that God would deliver them by force and destroy the wicked with force.

But Jesus has revealed this is not His character. And I'm giving you a new thought process. And I think from what I have presented, how these two words take it by force are presented in the New Testament, I think we're making a fairly strong case here. As I've got here again,

Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. **The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government;** (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 21)

Online Audience: It turns out you can't kill a kingdom built with violence.

Pr. Adrian: Yes.

Online Audience: So, if the kingdom of God suffers violence, it means that it is defiled (in the minds of men) with violence, and the truth about God's character is hidden.

Pr. Adrian: Yes, exactly. This is the point that I'm seeing in this text. That God's kingdom suffered the violence of the incorrect views that men were presenting in regard to the character of God. To me, this makes far more sense. Remember that this section is prefaced by stating that there was none greater than John the Baptist, but he that is least in the kingdom is greater than him. And we've already indicated that he wasn't in the kingdom. So, in that context, we see the rest of this statement is presenting to us that God's kingdom suffered this violent principle that had come from Satan.

This makes much more sense now. And these texts flow much more, at least in my mind, it flows a lot better. So, this cleared up a lot of things for me.

It's interesting because of when Christ came, we do get this apparent difference. Because from the time of John all the way back through the prophets, we have this wrong understanding. Then when Christ comes, we have this new understanding. Now, people have tried to connect the difference to the two covenants, to say that one is the old covenant, one is the new covenant. But that completely misses the point. And it mixes up the issue that is actually going on here. Because God still worked through John the Baptist. He worked through Moses. He worked through Elijah. He was condescending to meet these men where they were in their understanding.

Christ didn't come to change anything in the Torah, but to simply put it in its correct framework and to stop it from suffering violence. And yet how sad to know that after Christ went back to heaven, that within a very short period of time, the Christian faith again caused the kingdom

of God to suffer violence. This is why we see that in Daniel chapter 7, that when the Son of Man came to the Ancient of Days, which occurs at the end of the 2300 years, this is when He received the kingdom. Because the kingdom continued to suffer violence, even after Jesus had borne witness to the truth of God's character. Man blinded, he shut his eyes. And for another 1800 years, the kingdom of God suffered violence. But now a message has come. Now a message has come. Let us enter into the kingdom. Let us take hold.

Online Audience: How do you explain the part, the violent take it by force?

Pr. Adrian: Well, they take hold of the kingdom. But like John the Baptist, as I said earlier, he was not in the kingdom. He took hold of it. But he didn't enter into, it until the very end. So that's a good question.

Jesus also said in Matthew 24, "Many shall say, I am the Christ and shall deceive many." And as Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, that we once knew Christ in a worldly way. And the Bible also talks about wheat and tares growing up in the church. The church is made up of people, some are more closely in the kingdom and others are not. But they are in the church. And that is why the kingdom of God suffers violence, because God meets us where we are. He doesn't forbid us to come into the church because we have wrong understandings, because the church is a hospital for sinners. We come in with our wrong understandings. And therefore, we at first, we take it by force. But then we realize the truth of God's character.

Online Audience: Can we also say that the kingdom of God, unfortunately, has to be exposed to violence, or has to bear violence, because that is what we understand before Christ?

Pr. Adrian: Exactly. This is the point.

Online Audience: It is not to be taken. You ask for it and it shall be given.

Pr. Adrian: Yes. Ask. In my last presentation; I talked about the seed principle that the kingdom of heaven is like unto a seed and it grows up

slowly in your heart. We don't need to take it by force. But God allows us to take it by force in our old covenant understanding. He allows us to enter the church with our defiled understandings of His character. And the wheat and the tares grow together in the church. And then there are those who are filtered through and come into this correct understanding.

Online Audience: The violent take it by force is not about hurting others. It is about the fierce, all-in surrender that refuses to let fear, pride or religion keep you from entering the life of God.

Pr. Adrian: That would be the metaphorical understanding. But we all know that the Christian church teaches a principle of violence. And we ourselves who believe in the loving character of God have been told, I have been told that I'm going to burn in hell because of what I teach. That is a violent thought. I'm sure some of you have been told this as well.

This means that people who claim to be in the church are thinking violent thoughts and they are framing the kingdom of God in violence and they take it in violence. So obviously, because the Spirit of Prophecy presents this element of seizing the kingdom in earnestness, in sincerity, we can read it that way. But I'm suggesting to you that there is a much deeper and better way to read this. And it helps us to get a clear understanding of the kingdom of God. Another comment.

Online Audience: It also appears to me that by "the kingdom of God suffers violence," God is also suffering violence.

Pr. Adrian: Exactly. He is suffering violence. How is it for our Father, who keeps His own commandments, has never destroyed anyone, never killed anyone, to have ministers all through the Christian churches preaching about God destroying these people, God destroying those people? It pains Him. It causes Him tremendous grief to have to deal with this, but He suffers it willingly. Because He's not using force, He's not going to throw people out of the church because they have a wrong understanding. He suffers with us.

Online Audience: Fear-based systems react violently when love exposes them.

Pr. Adrian: Yes. Very good.

Online Audience: Bless God when we repent/*metanoia*; have a change of mind and believe the gospel. We are immediately, permanently, eternally saved.

Pr. Adrian: Yes. That's the word, isn't it? Repent, have a *metanoia*, have a change, repent in our understanding that God does not use violence. This is a really, really important principle.

So, in conclusion,

- The kingdom of Heaven is a kingdom of character. (We are sealed with the Father's name, as it says in Revelation 14:1.)
- Christ came to reveal this character. (He was the only one in the universe who could do it.)
- This is the good tidings or gospel. Isaiah 40:9-10
- The prophets did not fully understand God's character
- Therefore, all the prophets caused the kingdom to suffer violence.
- This is why John and all the prophets had to decrease in their expression of God's character and Christ's revelation must increase.
- Yet Christ built everything He said on the prophets, yet framed it within the correct character.

And in some similar manner, I would say to you, you know, I was, many of us have been raised in Adventism, raised on the Bible, and the Spirit of Prophecy, and yet the church that I was raised in took many of the principles that have been presented in truth and framed them into a wrong framework. But we see that these same tools, these same messages from 1844 up through 1888 and to 1915, we see, lo and behold,

that a completely different understanding can be presented. This is what Christ was doing with the work of the prophets. Notice what John says. And this is what I think Jesus was saying.

- I write no new commandment, yet a new commandment I write. 1 John 2:7-8. (The things that were written by the prophets, I'm not changing it; yet I am changing it, because I'm presenting the same material in a different framework. I'm putting new wine into new wineskins, not new wine into old wineskins.)
- The Old Testament needed a new wine skin or package.

This is what I'm seeing. So, I pray that this has been a blessing to you. This is all part of my research that I'm doing and presenting on the topic of the books of Joshua and Judges. I wanted to dig a little bit more deeply into this. And now I think we can present Matthew 11:11-15. We can give a deeper element to this as to what it means for the kingdom of God to suffer violence.

So, thank you, everyone, for listening. I'm glad that you could join us. I'm going to kneel and then we will close with a prayer.

Closing Prayer:

Father in heaven, I just thank you again for my dear friends and family all around the world. Thank you that we can study the Bible together. I pray that these thoughts will stir up our minds and we will anchor these points that are true. And if there is dross in the things that have been said, we will discover it and remove it.

Father, we pray that we would cease to have a violent spirit. We would cease to be presenting the kingdom in an incorrect way, not only in what we say, but in how we act. We all greatly long, Father, for that peace that passes all understanding. We long for calmness under provocation to be still when we are attacked. Many of us, most of us, have failed when we've been provoked or we've been challenged, or we've been told that we are foolish. Most of us have struggled and been tempted to retaliate or to say sharp words. We repent of these things, Father.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD SUFFERS VIOLENCE

We pray, Lord, for your Spirit, your calmness. We trust that you will complete this work that you have started in us. We cannot do it, but we can behold you and we can be changed, believing you will change us and that you will help us.

We thank you, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD SUFFERS VIOLENCE

What did Jesus mean when he said:

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. Matthew 11:12-14

Some have perceived this as a statement of the intensity with which God's people have entered the kingdom of God. But in the light of God's character, we discern that God's children do not use force or violence.

John the Baptist was the greatest of the prophets and yet still did not truly understand the character of God as Jesus expressed in this verse:

Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. Matthew 11:11

Jesus tells us that John was not in the kingdom at this point and this is the reason for John's doubts as to Christ being the Messiah. As a result, the kingdom of heaven was taught by John, and all the prophets mixed with violence, meaning God would destroy His enemies. Therefore the Kingdom of God was subject to the teaching and practice of violence. But in the revelation of Christ, this violence does not need to continue.