

Matt 11.1-19 – Who is Jesus to you?

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Main Point – Jesus is the Lord, don't reject him

Sometimes in life, in the Christian life, things just do not add up.

We cannot work out what God is doing.-----

We may find ourselves asking:

Why don't people get justice?-----

That's what Constable **Lynette Taylor's husband(SLIDE)** said in June, after Richard Pusey, who filmed her dying on the Eastern Freeway, got only a 3 month jail sentence.

He said, 'We're terribly disappointed and shattered that he didn't get what we would consider an appropriate sentence.'-----

Maybe not getting justice is something you live with, and you feel the impatience, or frustration or confusion.-----**(SLIDE)**

Or maybe we go through hardship, and have found ourselves asking,

If God loves me then why has this happened to me?-----

Or why hasn't Jesus come back already?-----

Waiting can be hard.

And we can become discouraged and demoralized.-----

We'll see shortly that John the Baptist experienced that.

But even when things don't add up we'll discover that Jesus is the Lord, he's the friend of sinners, and he can be trusted.-----

The first half of this book is drawing to a close.

As we heard from Andy in ch10, Jesus' disciples were called to proclaim the kingdom and persevere when suffering for it.

Now Jesus shifts from teaching his 12 disciples to teaching people in the towns.-----

In chapters 11-13 we'll learn more about Who Jesus is, and people will need to work out, Are they for or against Jesus?-----

So **John the Baptist's** disciples come up to Jesus with a question.-----

Now remember John had baptized Jesus back in **ch3**.

And there John was preaching judgement**(SLIDE)** and that the one to come after him would bring the judgement, and pour out the Holy Spirit.

John had warned wicked Israel that the Messiah would come in judgement.

And John's not seen any of this happen yet.

He'd said the axe is ready to cut the trees down, and the Messiah will burn up the ungodly, but he's still waiting.-----

In ch4 John had been arrested by King Herod.

Ch14 tells us Herod had divorced his wife and lured his sister in-law to leave her husband and marry him.

And John had denounced Herod, and paid the penalty, with prison.-----

What's more, he's heard reports of Jesus' ministry – wonderful works of mercy but no judgement.

And his followers come to Jesus and ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'

This is our first point of 3 points, Who is Jesus?-----

So for John the Baptist things do not add up.

John's finding that hard, and perplexing, confusing.

So he asks, Who are you Jesus?-----

It seems John's having doubts in the dungeon.-----

He's not necessarily lacking faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah;

God come to earth to rescue and rule his people.

He's likely just puzzled, confused.-----

And Jesus answers their question by quoting Scripture.

Tell John what you see and hear:

V5, 'The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy^(a) are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news'.

Jesus here is referring to prophecies about the Servant of the Lord, the Christ who would come, in **Isaiah 35.1-5,(SLIDE) 42.7 and 61.1-3**.-----

And if you remember Matt 8-9 we read Matthew's eye-witness accounts of Jesus healing the blind, the paralysed, the leper, the deaf; raising the dead.

Fulfilling Isa 61 he is the one who is to come, who preaches good news to the poor.---

John was confused and Jesus took him back to the scripture.-----

Who is Jesus?

As the fulfiller of scripture Jesus is the promised one, the servant of the Lord.

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the promised King and rescuer.-----

Do you know that He rescues and restores and saves?-----

But he will also judge.-----

Down in **v10** Jesus quotes **Malachi ch3v1**, which says the messenger prepares the way before you.**(SLIDE)**

And that 'you' is God coming to earth.

The Lord Almighty coming to earth in judgement.-----

Isaiah 35 says that too.-----

The Lord Jesus coming IS GOD coming.-----

The question then is, When will Jesus bring the judgement?-----

People can misinterpret and misunderstand Jesus and the timing of the salvation and judgement he brings.-----

I am no astronomer but if see the night sky and look at the southern cross(SLIDE) the stars all appear far away, but quite close to each other.

But do you know, the star at the top is 88 light years away from us, and the star at the bottom 232 light years away from us.-----

And one light year is 9 ½ trillion kms

Those stars are not close to each other at all.

From a distance they just appear close.-----

It's the same if you look at mountain ranges, like the Adirondack Mountains in New York State**(SLIDE)**.

Mountains in the distance can look quite close to each other.-----

But the Adirondack mountains have over 100 peaks spread over nearly 1 million hectares.

Mountains that appear close can actually be far apart.

A bit like that, OT prophecies spoke of the blessings and judgements God's promised King would bring.

But what wasn't clear in the OT, what wasn't clear to John the Baptist, was that the blessings and judgements would come in two stages.-----

Jesus first coming would bring many of the blessings; and judgement on Jesus.

Because on the cross, he suffered the judgment for our sins.-----

But we'll have to wait for his second coming for the judgement of all people.-----

The end time blessings have broken into history and are experienced, but the judgements are delayed.-----

So there is a now and not yet aspect to this, which John didn't realise.

The Messiah's blessings come now and not yet, for we only get their fullness in heaven, but God's total judgement upon sinners is not yet.-----

Does that make sense?-----

To simplify it, we might say Jesus came to bring salvation the first time, and judgement the next time.

But to the OT prophets it seemed both would come at once when the Messiah came.

I hope that makes sense.-----

So Who is Jesus?-----

He is the one to come, Jesus is the promised Messiah, God himself come in the flesh.
Jesus Christ is God's promised King and Saviour, the Lord.
He restores and saves people now, and eventually he will bring judgement.-----

Next Point, Who is John?-----**(SLIDE)**

V7, John's disciples leave and Jesus speaks to the crowd about John.

John is someone people went out to see in the desert.

They didn't go to see something ordinary, like a plant.

Or some rich royal, wearing soft silk.---- No.

They went out to see a prophet, this man wearing camel's hair.-----

John is a messenger from God.

And even if he misunderstood the Messiah, he's not weak, or a failure.----

In case people were questioning John, Jesus says, Don't!

For, **v11**, of everyone ever born, no one is greater than John the Baptist.-----

I remember boxer **Muhammad Ali** famously saying(**SLIDE**), 'I am the greatest'.-----

I know he meant at boxing, but still, Jesus says something different here.-----

Besides Jesus himself, no one born was greater than John.

No one else was more important or had a more special role.

And yet, whoever is least in God's Kingdom is greater than John.-----

Jesus likely means that John belonged to the old order.

He was the last O.T., Old Covenant prophet.

But being in Christ's Kingdom, makes you even more privileged.-----

Jesus' disciples, even the little children who come to him, or you and I, we are among the least in the kingdom of heaven.-----

You might be 5 years old and a preppy at school and feel the least.

But if you've trusted in Jesus, you are special and blessed.-----

Let's all think about that and be amazed – that we are in the kingdom of heaven.----

We live this side of the cross and resurrection.

We know and believe Jesus came to die to forgive our sins and rise to conquer death.

We get to understand who Jesus was and what he achieved.

We are blessed.

Christians, we are now closer to Jesus than John was, and that's an amazing privilege.-----

But Why was John so special?-----

Cos he was the forerunner to Christ.

He personally had the job of pointing people to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

In **v10** Jesus quotes Malachi 3 and says John prepared people for God himself, the Lord of Armies to come.

Jesus is God come amongst us!-----

What a role – to say God himself has arrived, come and see!-----

In **v14** we learn John is 'the Elijah who was to come'.-----

Here Jesus quotes the very last verse of the OT, from **Malachi ch4**.

John isn't Elijah reincarnated, but a second Elijah, another huge prophet who would come 'before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes'.

Malachi 3&4 say lots about God's coming judgement?-----

Like in **4v1**,(**SLIDE**) "Look the day is coming; burning like a furnace, when all the arrogant and everyone who commits wickedness will become stubble. The coming day will consume them", says the Lord of Armies.

And Elijah, John, will come 'before that great and terrible day of the Lord'.-----

So, in **Matt 3.12** John had been preaching that the Messiah, would 'burn with a fire that never goes out'.

And John was expecting Jesus to preach judgement, and bring judgement.

But Jesus wasn't turning out to be the Messiah he'd expected.

Still, John isn't waiting for someone else.

As we've seen, Jesus the Messiah will bring it, just not yet.-----
 So John is puzzled or has his doubts about Christ.----
 I wonder, **Have you ever had doubts** about Jesus?-----**(SLIDE)**
 Maybe about God being real, or God's love for you?-----
 Have you ever doubted that you really do have a place in heaven through faith in Jesus?
 Or doubted that you will escape God's judgement?-----
 I think if we're honest, most of us have had doubts.
 And to have doubts is not sinful, it's normal.-----
 If that's you now, I encourage you to remind yourself of what Jesus says here.
 And I encourage you to pray: God help my unbelief.-----
 Don't hide your doubts. Like John does, ask questions and seek help.
 Maybe in a little book like this**(SLIDE)**.
 Or by talking to a Christian friend or leader.-----
 Or, if things don't quite add up for you regarding Jesus, or you're still working that out;
 I encourage you to sign up for the next Christianity Explored course starting soon,
 or I'd love to make a time to meet with you.-----

This brings us to our final point, Who is Jesus to you?-----

We'll first consider the responses of Jesus' first hearers before thinking about us.
v12 highlights there's many who oppose and reject Jesus.-----
 This verse is difficult to interpret.**(SLIDE)**
 The footnote in the CSB could be correct – that the Kingdom of heaven has been forcefully
 advancing; as courageous people enter it, by turning to Jesus.
 Jesus's kingdom advances as people turn away from rebellion and autonomy and turn to
 him, submit to him.-----
 Or it could mean, and it's also true that people are forcing against it.
 So the violent refers to the zealots, Pharisees and Jewish leaders, who are trying to attack,
 plunder n' pillage the Kingdom.
 And Christ's church was and is suffering violence.
 As Andy shared the last 2 weeks, enemies of King Jesus seek to violently **oppose his
 people**, and oppose the truth.----
 It started with King Herod imprisoning John for speaking the truth.
 And Jesus will be violently abused and executed on a cross, won't he?----
 Christ's kingdom is being forcefully opposed.-----
 Why?—Cos people reject Christ, and his Lordship over them.-----

Then you have others who just **ignore Jesus** and don't respond to him.-----
 In **v16&17** Jesus is saying people are like children playing games.-----
 Maybe you're a teen or tween who likes watching dances on **Tik Tok**,**(SLIDE)** but it never
 motivates you to get up and dance too.-----
 Or maybe you're a younger child who plays Mums n' Dads?
 Well Jesus says, his generation has kids playing Weddings and funerals.
 But whether kids ask others to dance with them, or mourn with them, they don't.
 They do nothing.**(SLIDE)**-----
 Jesus goes further and says most people are like winging little kids, who can't be pleased.---
 You just can't win with some people.
v18 John didn't meet their expectations, he didn't eat and drink, or celebrate, and was falsely
 accused.
 Jesus did eat and drink, n' was happy to party, so got accused of being a glutton and a
 drunkard.
 On top of that he was accused of being a 'friend of tax collectors and sinners'.
 So Jesus is saying, You hate that I hang with sinners.
 You hate that I heal the unworthy.
 You hate that I preach repentance.
 And you hate that I proclaim the Gospel.----

You hate that I have authority.-----
 But Jesus didn't want to play their games, live by their terms, or meet their expectations.-----
 But in the end his deeds, **v19**, will prove he is wise and truthful.----
 In the end his resurrection will be the deed which vindicates him.
 For actions speak louder than words.-----

So who is Jesus to you?----(SLIDE)

Someone to be ignored, or rejected, even opposed?-----
 Many agenda-setters in society today want to silence and squash Christian views in the public-square. Keep Christ out of schools, parliament, workplaces;
 And fine, even imprison anyone who won't follow their agenda.-----
 We see this in matters of marriage, gender, morality, and Jesus' exclusivity – being the only way to God.-----
 Should you keep Jesus out of your life, and out of public view?-----

Or to you is Jesus the one who you're not offended by, v6, and who has brought you blessing?

For you know he's the one who brings healing and wholeness and heaven.-----
 You may still be waiting for that.
 But fellow followers of Jesus, you will experience that in heaven, and the life to come.
 Or you may be waiting for freedom as the covid restrictions have stopped you working; or brought financial hardship, loneliness, stress, confinement.---
 And why our Lord permits this may not add up.-----
 I know waiting can be hard; but it's just a matter of time.-----
 Just like Jesus wanted John to wait and hang in there, trusting him, I hope you can too.-----
 And if you've trusted in Jesus you're going to heaven, for you're a member of the kingdom of heaven.-----
 And if you've trusted in Jesus then he is your friend.
 And what a blessing, what a comfort to have Jesus, the friend of sinners,**v19**, as your friend.-
 He went to the cross, hung on that cross until he died, to save you save you and I from our sin and the judgment we deserved.
 And to have the Son of God, the Messiah and King, the Lord of all, as our friend, what a blessing.-----
 What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear.-----
 You need Jesus as your friend.
 Cos if he aint your friend now, then on that last day he'll be your judge.-----
 So by faith will you take him, and have him as Lord of your life?-----
 For he is faithful and he is worth it!-----

And if he is your Lord and your friend then you are to listen to him, **v15**.-----
 And we show wisdom when we listen to him.
 And **v19** the proof of wisdom is in the actions it produces, both for Jesus and for us.
 By God's grace and the wisdom he gives, when we've turned to Jesus, it will show itself in our deeds.
 Our lives are to show the truth and wisdom of Jesus, and the difference he makes.---

In August 2017 **Tamaryn walked into Koorong** (the Christian bookstore).
 She says, My hair was dark, my face lines in despair. I had soul but not life, so blind that I couldn't see.
 It was the first day in forever that I picked up the Bible to read from it.
 That was the day I met **Nicola** a worker a Koorong, Blackburn.
 I was asked to go in and pick up a 'Message' Bible for my partner who had been in a Christian drug and rehab centre.
 Tamaryn says I was spiritual but not religious. I had a warped vision of what being a Christian was. I asked Nicola for a hand in finding the Bible and her warm persona and

kindness was like that of a Big Hug I had been waiting for – that warmness is what I would come to find is Christ working within us and his spirit shining through us.

I was tallying up my money, wondering how I'd have enough to get one for me too.

Nicola came back with a Bible and said 'this is a gift for you'.

Tamaryn asked Nicola to write in it and she did quoting Ex 14, 'The Lord will fight for you, you need only be still'.-----

Nicola didn't know that Tamaryn was and in some parts was still an abused woman, with a previous marriage breakdown, alienated from her girls, in 2015 an arsonist burnt her home down, she lost everything, and since suffered many mental breakdowns, on many meds.

Tamaryn says I found it hard to leave the house, and sat on the couch for a year, barely even living. I pretended in was happy but inside I was in the type of pain only those who've been in the dark can comprehend. I was broken.

That was the first day I prayed over my Bible and was led to Psalm 18.

That whole passage fed my hope in such a powerful way. Thank you Jesus.

That day changed by life. I am now a gracious fruit bearer of a sound mind in God's loving grace. I quit smoking. I don't drink alcohol any more and stopped cursing. My heart has been transformed.

I have accepted Jesus into my life, my partner asked me to marry him. I was baptized in the Ocean at San Remo in Feb 2018.

I have beared witness to Christ, he is restoring my family, I have been able to gift Bibles and pay it forward.

Praise God for giving me vision when the darkness blinded me.-----

I think both the lives and deeds of Nicola and Tamaryn prove Christ's wisdom right, their lives vindicate how Christ saves and changes people.

And maybe one of their examples has inspired you to show by your deeds that Christ is the Lord, and friend of sinners.-----

Kindness and generosity to a person in need.

Turning to Scripture for hope and light in your darkness.

Loving others you can, even in lockdown.----

How will you respond?-----

Sometimes things don't add up, and we can wonder what God is doing.

But in Jesus you will find truth and wisdom and life.

Don't ignore or reject him.

He brings salvation. He will bring judgement.

He is the Lord to be listened to.

So respond to Jesus.

Trust him and live for him!-----

Let's pray