



MONDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 11:1-6

Plug In...

John the Baptist exemplifies the persecution Jesus just told the Twelve to expect. John preached God, preached the Kingdom, preached Jesus as Messiah and now finds himself imprisoned. This raises a question. Is Jesus the Messiah? Remember, John introduced the Messiah as ready to save and ready to judge (*cf.* Matthew 3:11-12). This was the great anticipation and expectation of the coming of the Messiah. Jesus answers with a report the delegation can return to John with. The report lists works expected by anyone familiar with the Messiah figure (e.g., Isaiah 35:4-6 & 61:1). Jesus gives the report and appeals to keep believing, keep trusting.

Chew It Over...

Jesus doesn't dismiss John for having doubts, raising questions. How does Jesus deal with John's doubts?

Look again at the list of wonders (v.5). What would you say is the most spectacular of those spectacular things? Where does the list climax? What might this mean?

Prayer Suggestion

Ask the Lord to cultivate in you a sensitive ability to probe how people are seeing things, how they put things together. Ask for help in understanding Scripture more thoroughly to help people with their doubts and questions.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 11:7-15 & Malachi 3

Plug In...

Largely, Israel disregarded John's message, Jesus Himself, and was expected to spurn the Twelve on mission (10:23). Jesus interrogates the crowd unmasking the flawed reasons they went to goggle at John (i.e. did they go to see a fashion show; or have a laugh at someone odd?).

Jesus takes us to Malachi 3-4. Here, God broadcasts He will visit an evil Israel and "who can endure the day of His coming?". Malachi 3-4 says this announcement will prompt a group within Israel to repent and God will refine them (i.e. cleanse them). That group emerge shining as righteous and will be called God's "treasured possession". Malachi's forewarning climaxes with a messenger not unlike Elijah notifying Israel that time is up, they must turn back now.

Malachi is the end of the section in the Old Testament called *The Prophets*. This last verse of the last prophetic book informs that unless God *sent* and *preached* this message (which causes a selected group to turn back) the entire land would be destroyed. Jesus signifies that John the Baptist is this *last-messenger-before-God* personality.

Chew It Over...

The New Testament teaches the moment of the “Day of the Lord” comes in two phases. Careful reading of Malachi chapters 3-4 suggests this as well. The Day of the Lord begins with an initial call for people to return, followed by the fire-furnace which reveals who indeed turned. Jesus teaches we are in between those moments now. Jesus unpacks the prophecy about the *next-to-last* man to signal that He – the *last-man* – is God arriving. Collectively both John, Jesus, and any messenger from now until Jesus’ return operates in between these two moments. God in mercy has given the message and provided an ‘age of turning back’.

This also helps explain the persecution the Twelve were to expect, and John was enduring. The refining Malachi said God will do on the last day reveals who are His treasured possession. John is an example of going through the refinement.

You too may be undergoing trial and test (*cf.* James 1:2-4). Remember, “Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me”.

Prayer Suggestion

Give glory to God that He’s given you ears to hear the call to repent and turn back. Ask that you will live each moment in the light of Jesus’ wonderful work by which He refines us. Thank Him that we’ve avoided being reduced to stubble. Ask that the shining righteousness we’ll one day emerge with will appear more and more now.



WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 11:12-13

Plug In...

There are two main ways people have understood these verses. First, violent people are forcefully trying to control the Kingdom. Second, people in their keenness to enter the Kingdom will violently let nothing stop them joining. Option 1 fits the theme of Matthew 10 & 11. Jesus levelled with the Twelve that there would be violent opposition to preaching the Kingdom. John the Baptist is on show as someone violently seized by authorities in an attempt to shut down his preaching. [See John's violent end – Matthew 14.]

Chew It Over...

Australia is slowly changing. More and more authorities are, if not shutting down preaching, hosing down preaching of the Kingdom. Consider debates about Scripture in schools; same-sex marriage legislation. The difference between authorities in Australia and say those in Jesus' day (i.e. King Herod) is Australian authorities are not autocratic. In Australia, many laws and policies are written in response to other things (they are reactionary). The laws of Australia are not set from the top down, but follow culture. We still have opportunity to influence our culture. Unfortunately, it often works like this: first there is a general political-correctness ("Oh you're a Christian, well keep your view to yourself please"), and so the Christian doesn't speak up ever at say a parent-and-teacher school meeting or a business board meeting. Then, school guidelines and corporation policies get written without any shaping or

counteraction from the Christian voice. Then parliament and legislators look at what policies and guidelines already exist and develop legislation from there.

This is not to say that Jesus is arguing here the goal is to change culture. Jesus' point is that preaching will be coupled with resistance at all levels (*cf.* 10:17-18; 21). However, we are still in a position in Australia where we can smell the cultural air and have influence to maximise and preserve the opportunity to preach the gospel freely in Australia ("be as clever as snakes and innocent as doves").

Currently gospel resistance is mainly at a grass-roots level not coming from legislation. Are we skirting this battleground? We might be in for heavier battles if we do. Your circle of influence is right in front of you.

Prayer Suggestion

Ask for courage to share your view of Christ and the best way to live locally: with family, with those you are easily connected to and within your circle of influence.



THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 11:16-20

Plug In...

The little song here is essentially like when a kid goes, "If you're not playing my game, then I'm not playing yours!" Those opposing Jesus slam John in the slammer and they reject Jesus. The final line, "Wisdom is proved right by her deeds," shows the game the Pharisees are playing is wrong and dangerous.

Chew It Over...

There are many games played with Christianity. 'Christianity' is now a very fuzzy word which means lots of things. Current shows like Shaun Micallef's documentary *Stairway to Heaven* (shown on SBS) is an example of one guy trying to figure out what do people mean by the words "Christianity", "faith", "Jesus". There is so much confusion because just like the Pharisees in Jesus' day, they take the label "God's people" and mess up all that God had said – they play their own game.

Do we play games too? Ask yourself if on the whole you can say that your life (personally and publicly) matches Jesus' definition of being a Christian? [Don't read this question as though it asks are you perfect? The question is about overall consistency.]

Does our life confuse people about Jesus and true Christianity, or give clarity?

Prayer Suggestion

Repent before God if we've been playing games. Ask for deep love for Him and consistency in life before others so as to demonstrate Jesus with truth and clarity.



FRIDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: [Matthew 11:20-24](#) & [1 Corinthians 10:1-12](#)

Plug In...

The heavy-handed denouncing Jesus does is directed to towns that had experienced Jesus' presence. Each of those towns are within Israel. The Israelite towns are compared with pagan towns, notorious for their sin and rebellion. Given the Israelite towns had rejected Jesus, when placed along a spectrum, they're evaluated more harshly than pagans because of what they knew and experienced.

Chew It Over...

At this point Jesus is not speaking about nations/people that don't know Him, He's addressing those who have heard clearly and experienced Him.

There is a message here for the 'Christian' who might not be taking Jesus seriously. Make sure you read [1 Corinthians 10:1-12](#).

Prayer Suggestion

Again, Lord we ask that our confession of you is deep and genuine. We have been blessed to be involved in church, hear the gospel clearly, know who the Lord Jesus is. May you prevent us from spurning that privilege. Hold us fast, make us consistent.



WEEKEND 18-19 FEBRUARY 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 11:25-30

Plug In...

Jesus just denounced people within Israel who had experienced Jesus' presence. [NB: They experienced God's presence. Isaiah 42:8 says the LORD will not give His glory to another. If He does give His glory to another (i.e. the man Jesus – Matthew 11:27), then that man is God!]

Many in Israel, especially the leaders, distorted things deliberately to mess up God's revelation (Matthew 11:17); they've been so arrogant they've rejected and condemned God's Messiah-King in their presence.

This is not the last word. Jesus is Lord. The Father has committed all things to Jesus (all power and authority – Matthew 28:18) and Jesus is choosing and revealing it to 'little children'. People who don't consider themselves 'wise' and 'learned' (i.e. are not proud and arrogant), Jesus chooses.

Chew It Over...

Remember the Beatitudes were not prerequisites to receive the Kingdom of Heaven but the *blessing* which God *confers* effecting what it announces. “Blessed are the poor in spirit” – We cannot make ourselves humble and little. Humility does not earn grace. God’s grace is what makes us humble. Calvin pointed out that Jesus is here thanking God for His sovereign grace, not thanking ‘little children’ for their voluntary humility.

If you humbly confess and repent before God – that action is a gift of His grace. Are there people you need to entreat Jesus to bestow humility, confession, and repentance upon?

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for breaking our stiff-necks and hard arrogant hearts. Recognise the Holy Spirit humbling us and rejoice that Jesus has been so kind in calling us.