



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Summer 2018 Leader Commentary

Unit 2: No Doubt About It
Session 2: He Is the One (see pp. 124-127)

The Question: Is Jesus the only way to God?

The Point: You don't have to look for another.

Background Passage: Matthew 11

Focal Passage: Matthew 11:1-9, 20-21

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "Is Jesus the only way to God?" and drive home this one truth: You don't have to look for another.

Focus on These Points

Has Exclusive Title
(Matt. 11:1-3)

Matthew 11:1-6 contains additional information to that recorded in Matthew 3 about John the Baptist. John's imprisonment effectively passed the baton to Jesus so that He could continue the ministry John had announced and described.

In these verses John asked if Jesus was literally the one who would come as referred to by the prophets of the Old Testament when they described the Messiah.

John may have thought, however, that Jesus was not the Messiah he had pictured in his mind since there was little to resemble the political and military liberations he and many other Jews believed would usher in the time of the promised Messiah. John's disciples asked the question John had requested them to ask: Was Jesus truly the promised Messiah?

Has Provided Evidentiary Power
(Matt. 11:4-6)

Jesus answered by telling John's disciples to report to John what they had heard Jesus say and seen Him do. He instructed them to become witnesses of their personal experiences with Jesus. Jesus was healing blind, lame, leprous, and deaf people and raising the dead. Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would perform these kinds of ministries (see Isa. 35:4-6; 61:1-2). John was to base His conclusion on how Jesus' ministry fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament.

In these verses Jesus challenged John the Baptist's disciples to report what they witnessed as evidence of His identity.

The wording of verse 6 is similar to the Beatitudes Jesus offered in Matthew 5:3-12. In this verse Jesus again mentioned that those who would be persecuted because of Jesus would be blessed, or happy.

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***We Must Look for Godliness—Not Greatness
(Matt. 11:7-9)***

When John's disciples left Him, Jesus spoke high words of praise and affirmation concerning John the Baptist to the crowds (Matt. 11:7-15). Though John had been a prophet in the desert, he was more than a prophet. In fact, John was the Elijah God had promised would come (Mal. 4:5). Some violently opposed him and his kingdom message. Others eagerly rushed to hear John and embraced his teachings. Despite persecution, rejection, and personal suffering, John persevered in his faith and in his message. John was literally the first person to experience direct opposition because of the message of Christ.

Even as John's disciples were walking away, Jesus turned to the crowd, many of whom were probably familiar with John's ministry. He began to help them understand the contradiction that was John, similar to the contradiction that was Jesus.

Jesus' quote of Malachi 3:1-5 made a statement about John the Baptizer. But for those who knew its context, the quote made an even more significant statement about Jesus Himself. The messenger would prepare the way for One who would bring justice that the complainers of Israel would not welcome. He would be the messenger of the covenant, proclaiming judgment on them as the breakers of the covenant (see Matt. 23).

***You Must Choose by Faith
(Matt. 11:20-21)***

Matthew referred to the cities in which Jesus did most of His miracles. He mentioned only three cities by name, all most likely within a few miles of one another. "Proceeded to denounce" (v. 20) may indicate that these three were only a representative sampling of the cities Jesus visited and denounced.

In this context Jesus challenged the cities of Israel to "repent" concerning His identity and their own sin and to prove their change of thinking and belief by a change in behavior. Because they did not respond with repentance to such an obvious demonstration of the truth about Him, they earned His curse, rather than His blessing.

Because the Jewish cities had more actual evidence of Jesus' miracles to cause them to repent—and therefore more accountability—they would incur a much stricter judgment. Jesus did not lessen the severity of judgment on the Gentile cities but used the severity of their judgment to heighten even further the sinfulness of the Jewish cities. The Jews had the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, as well as their fulfillment before their eyes in Jesus. To reject the Messiah-King in the face of such evidence was a greater offense than the worst offenses of Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon, who were ignorant in their sin. Jesus stated that if these ignorant Gentiles had been presented with the same evidence, they would have repented and shown greater character than God's chosen people.