

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 24

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS



MATTHEW; LUKE



MEMORY VERSES

“What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

—Luke 11:11-13



HE IS THE MESSIAH

CORE PASSAGE: MATTHEW 11:2-10,16-19

CONTEXT

John the Baptist was raised up by God as the prophet promised to precede the coming of the Messiah. He was to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord by calling them to repentance and baptizing them as they confessed their sins. He fulfilled this mission as he pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. But as John's ministry decreased, he was arrested and imprisoned for speaking out against Herod's unlawful marriage. This led to some questions about Jesus's increasing ministry: Was Jesus indeed the Messiah? So John reached out from prison for an answer.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus's actions and the fruit of His actions prove that He is the Messiah.

As you examine Matthew 11:2-10,16-19:

- Identify the evidence that proves Jesus is the promised Messiah.
- Analyze the foolish standards by which people reject Jesus as the Messiah.



TIMELINE

John the Baptist Calls People to Repentance in Preparation for Jesus and Baptizes Jesus (Matthew 3:1-17)

John Is Arrested for Confronting King Herod (Matthew 4:12)

SESSION STUDY:
John the Baptist Seeks Confirmation That Jesus Is the Messiah (Matthew 11:1-19)

John Scales Back His Ministry (John 3:22-36)

Jesus Delivers His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-7:29)

John Is Beheaded by King Herod (Matthew 14:1-12)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Day 1: Matthew 10:1-15 | ☐ Day 4: Matthew 11:16-24 |
| ☐ Day 2: Matthew 10:16-42 | ☐ Day 5: Matthew 11:25-30 |
| ☐ Day 3: Matthew 11:1-15 | ☐ Day 6: Psalm 149 |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

Notes



Bonus Content

Scan this QR code to learn more about John the Baptist's imprisonment.

JESUS POINTED TO HIS ACTIONS AS EVIDENCE OF HIS MESSIAHSHIP (MATTHEW 11:2-10).

Circle the actions of Jesus that validated His messiahship.

2 Now when John heard in prison what the Christ was doing, he sent a message through his disciples **3** and asked him, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” **4** Jesus replied to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: **5** The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news, **6** and blessed is the one who isn’t offended by me.” **7** As these men were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the wind? **8** What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothes? See, those who wear soft clothes are in royal palaces. **9** What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. **10** This is the one about whom it is written: See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.”

When John the Baptist was first introduced, he was described as a bold, eccentric, humble man who boldly proclaimed that Jesus is the Messiah. Now John was in prison, and he questioned whether Jesus really was the One who was promised. It is possible that John was discouraged—he was in prison for confronting King Herod about his illicit marriage to his brother’s wife (Luke 3:19-20). Perhaps John’s unjust persecution was the cause of this doubt, but regardless of the motivation, John was not as sure about Jesus as he was at first.

Jesus’s response was not a simple affirmation but a description of the evidence that would affirm to John that Jesus is the Christ. All the miracles that Jesus performed up to that point should have made it abundantly clear to John and to anyone else that Jesus is God the Son. The voice of God, who spoke after Jesus’s baptism, spoke the undeniable truth—Jesus is God’s Son, the Messiah, and God is well-pleased with Him (Matt. 3:17).

LEADER NOTE: When Jesus replied to John’s question, He alluded to Isaiah 35:5-6 and 61:1-2. Isaiah 35:5-6 describes the blessings that would accompany the Israelites’ redemption, and Isaiah 61:1-2 is an explicit messianic passage that Jesus said was fulfilled in Himself in Luke 4:16-21. John the Baptist would be very familiar with Isaiah’s words and would be able to make a quick connection between Jesus’s miracles and what God promised the Messiah would accomplish.

What evidence from your life proves that Jesus is who He says He is?

Notes

Jesus not only pointed to the miracles that gave evidence that He is the Messiah, but He also pointed back to John as evidence of fulfilled prophecy. Jesus did not defend Himself but instead defended John the Baptist and affirmed his role in the coming of the Christ. Jesus referenced Malachi 3:1, a clear prophecy of the forerunner for the Christ, and He identified John as this forerunner.

Jesus declared that John the Baptist was not just a prophet of something that would happen later, but he was the one who announced that the promises of God were being fulfilled at that time in Jesus. John's doubt did not discredit his ministry. John was human, and as such, he needed Jesus's help clarifying the truth. Jesus affirmed John's ministry and affirmed His own messiahship.

LEADER NOTE: Questions regarding doubt can be a difficult conversation in Christian circles. Some say that any form of doubt is sinful, which it could be, but this passage gives Christians a clear and helpful example of how Jesus views doubt. Jesus did not condemn John for questioning His identity. Rather, Jesus confronted John's doubt with reassurance and affirmation by pointing to His miracles and the Old Testament prophecies. When we know someone is struggling with doubt, we should encourage them to bring their questions directly to God, to use Scripture and Jesus's work as evidence to reassure them, and to affirm Christ as their security.

Why are the Old Testament prophecies important for understanding the New Testament?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SPECIAL REVELATION: Special revelation refers to God's revealing Himself to humanity through historical events, His Word, and through Jesus Christ. Through special revelation, human beings learn about God's character, His will, His purpose for creation, and His plan of redemption. Special revelation shows us the nature and character of God, and because God has revealed Himself in this way, we can know Him—through a saving relationship with Him in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

REJECTING JESUS IS FOOLISH AS THE FRUIT OF HIS WORK IS EVIDENT (MATTHEW 11:16-19).

Contrast the ways the people viewed John the Baptist and Jesus: underline what they said about John, and circle what they said about Jesus.

16 “To what should I compare this generation? It’s like children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to other children: **17** We played the flute for you, but you didn’t dance; we sang a lament, but you didn’t mourn! **18** For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon!’ **19** The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

In this section, Jesus condemned the people for being stubborn and refusing to listen to God’s message. He compared them to children complaining that games were not going their way in verses 16-17.

Jesus then drew a comparison between Himself and John. He remarked that John was not an indulgent man, that he did not eat or drink. John often fasted and practiced strict dietary habits (9:14). The people criticized John for being too strict and harsh, saying he was possessed by a demon. Jesus, on the other hand, came eating and drinking—He did not fast like John did, and He ate meals with sinners (9:10-15). Because of this, Jesus was accused of being a drunkard and a glutton! For both John and Jesus, the people complained about their lifestyles, more concerned with critiquing their eating habits than with listening to their message, witnessing their miracles, or following their lead.

LEADER NOTE: The social behavior of both Jesus and John was deeply scrutinized by the masses as an ad hominem attack against their message—meaning the masses tried to attack the person rather than the position they held to discredit both. The people were not satisfied with neither John’s nor Jesus’s behavior and used it as an excuse to disregard their teaching. The complaints from those in Jesus’s day are not much different from what many religious people do today. Equating non-essential choices (like whether you fast or share meals with sinners) with essential choices (like preaching the gospel) creates a spirit of criticism and distracts from obedience.

How might your complaints be keeping you from obeying Jesus?



Key Concept: Jesus's actions and the fruit of His actions prove that He is the Messiah.

Because the people were so caught up in this attitude of criticism, they rejected both John and Jesus. So Jesus exposed how fickle their hearts were. Regardless of how the Messiah was revealed to them, whether through John's proclamations or Jesus's teachings and miracles, the people rejected the truth.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Though the evidence of Jesus and His works is historically accurate, many will reject Him as Lord and Savior (Matt. 7:13). Still, we have a mission to share the gospel with others to give people the opportunity to know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

How can we confront our own fickle, unbelieving generation with the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

In conclusion, Jesus declared what the people needed to hear, making a statement about wisdom. The people in the crowd would have remembered the numerous references in the book of Proverbs to wisdom calling in the streets. Proverbs often personified wisdom as a woman speaking to her children and pleading with them to listen to her. Here Jesus called the people to listen to what He was saying and to understand who He is. Since Jesus is "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24), when He stated that "wisdom is vindicated by her deeds" (Matt. 11:19), He meant that His and John's ministry would be vindicated by their actions—meaning they would be clear of blame and their actions would be justified.

LEADER NOTE: Verse 19 of this passage requires a deeper look into Proverbs to grasp its meaning. As mentioned, the book of Proverbs often referred to wisdom as a woman calling out in the streets. Proverbs 8:32-36 expresses that those who find wisdom find life and those who do not instead find death. Along the same lines, the apostle Paul wrote: "The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved" (1 Cor. 1:18). Jesus's generation rejected Jesus and John because they rejected the evidence and the truth. Those who reject Christ today do the same.

Notes

ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: As people arrive, begin with this icebreaker question: “When have you needed proof before you believed something?” (*reading reviews before a purchase; waiting to see actions before trusting someone’s word; seeing a car or sofa or larger purchase before buying used from a stranger*)

SAY: Just like we often look for evidence before we believe, John the Baptist sought some proof to justify his faith that Jesus is the Messiah.

CONTEXT

SUMMARIZE: John the Baptist, who boldly proclaimed Jesus as the Lamb of God, was now imprisoned for speaking out against King Herod’s unlawful marriage to his brother’s wife. A popular conception of the Messiah at the time was of a liberator who would overthrow Rome, bring the Israelites back to their homeland, and restore the nation of Israel. But having pointed to Jesus as the promised Messiah and handing off his ministry to this One he believed to be greater than him, John began to have some doubts in prison. Was this the time for the kingdom or not? Was Jesus truly the Messiah or was there another? These questions led John to seek answers from Jesus directly.

RECAP

ASK: What stood out to you in your personal preparation this week about how Jesus revealed His identity in response to John the Baptist’s question?

SAY: Recall that the works and evidence Jesus pointed to for John’s benefit fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, just as John himself had in preparing the way for the Messiah. No doubt this encouraged John’s faith, but the same evidence also led people with hard hearts to reject Him.

TRANSITION: With this in mind, we are going to do an activity that will challenge us to understand how John’s disciples might have processed Jesus’s response to John the Baptist’s question.



Listen to session-by-session training every week on

Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, or Spotify

ministrygrid.com/gospelproject • gospelproject.com/leader-training.

Key Concept: Jesus's actions and the fruit of His actions prove that He is the Messiah.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CASE STUDY: Direct your group to page 92 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a case study activity titled “Are You the One?” Recreate the response sections on a board so you can record the group’s thoughts.

Are You the One?

Read the passages below and prepare a response for John’s disciples to bring back to him.

CASE STUDY: Imagine you are one of John the Baptist’s disciples. You’ve been sent to Jesus with John’s question: “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” You’ve just heard Jesus point to His works as proof of His identity. Now you must process what you have heard.

MATTHEW 11:5-6

ISAIAH 35:5-6

ISAIAH 61:1-2

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL JOHN THE BAPTIST IN PRISON?

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 11:2-6.

ENGAGE: Guide the group to identify the actions Jesus pointed to in this passage that affirmed His messiahship. Distribute copies of **Pacl/ Item 10: Jesus’s Miracles in Galilee** and highlight a few of the healings Jesus referenced. Write down Jesus’s evidence on the chart, citing Scripture references.

SAY: Any one of the miracles that Jesus performed should have been enough to convince most people that He was unique as a human being. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, gave hearing to the deaf, and even raised the dead to life. Other prophets and apostles would do such things, but the Old Testament Scriptures revealed the Messiah would do all these things.

ANALYZE: Form small groups of three to four. Instruct these small groups to read Isaiah 35:5-6 and Isaiah 61:1-2 and to write down what Isaiah prophesied the Messiah would do. Then, with Jesus’s actions and Isaiah’s prophecies in mind, ask: “What would you report back to John? How would you reassure him?”

Notes

MIRACLE	SCRIPTURE	PURPOSE	REMARK
Jesus healed a demon-possessed man (Matt. 12:22)	Matthew 12:22	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a blind man (Matt. 12:23)	Matthew 12:23	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a deaf man (Matt. 12:24)	Matthew 12:24	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a lame man (Matt. 12:25)	Matthew 12:25	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a withered hand (Matt. 12:26)	Matthew 12:26	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:27)	Matthew 12:27	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:28)	Matthew 12:28	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:29)	Matthew 12:29	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:30)	Matthew 12:30	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:31)	Matthew 12:31	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:32)	Matthew 12:32	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:33)	Matthew 12:33	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:34)	Matthew 12:34	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:35)	Matthew 12:35	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:36)	Matthew 12:36	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:37)	Matthew 12:37	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:38)	Matthew 12:38	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:39)	Matthew 12:39	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:40)	Matthew 12:40	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:41)	Matthew 12:41	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:42)	Matthew 12:42	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:43)	Matthew 12:43	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:44)	Matthew 12:44	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:45)	Matthew 12:45	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:46)	Matthew 12:46	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:47)	Matthew 12:47	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:48)	Matthew 12:48	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:49)	Matthew 12:49	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.
Jesus healed a man with a fever (Matt. 12:50)	Matthew 12:50	To show Jesus had authority over Satan	The Pharisees and teachers of the law accused Jesus of being the Son of David.

REGROUP: Invite each small group to select one “disciple” to report back to the large group as if they were telling John the Baptist what they saw and heard and what it meant. Encourage them to ground their response in Scripture and in Jesus’s actions. Say: “Having heard these reports, notice how Jesus pointed to evidence, not just words. His works spoke louder than a simple yes.”

DEBRIEF

Why do you think Jesus chose to let His works speak for Him instead of giving a direct yes?

How does Jesus’s evidence comfort us when we face doubts about who Jesus is?

SUMMARIZE

Jesus’s actions fulfilled prophecy and proved His identity as the Messiah. The evidence was clear, but people’s responses varied—some believed; others rejected Him. Likewise, our response to the gospel of Jesus reveals the condition of our hearts.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 93). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: This passage challenges us to think thoroughly about who Jesus is and how we ought to respond to Him. Sometimes we struggle with doubt, but we can remember that Jesus’s miracles proved He is the Messiah. Sometimes we let our own preferences or criticism cloud our ability to hear and obey God’s words. Therefore, we must examine how our beliefs are shaped. May our beliefs be based not on popular opinion, public bias, or even personal experience but on the truth found in Scripture.

How does the truth of Jesus in Scripture address your doubts and questions in life?



HEART: Moments of doubt or unbelief are familiar to most Christians and reveal how our faith can be clouded by our experiences. An imprisoned John the Baptist shows that even the most faithful Christians can have moments of uncertainty. When we face illness, family strife, or unjust persecution, it may be difficult to see God’s goodness. We need God’s grace in our struggles to help us rest in the truth of who He is and what He has done.

What struggles are you facing that call for you to turn to Jesus as He is revealed in Scripture?

Key Concept: Jesus's actions and the fruit of His actions prove that He is the Messiah.



HANDS: John the Baptist's ministry and the many miracles of Jesus reveal that obedience to God is not just with words but with wise actions. Likewise, our obedience should correspond to God's instructions in His Word. When we obey the Lord, we can trust our actions to be vindicated by Him, even though the world may criticize, rebuke, and persecute us in response.

What actions will you do this week to help others see the wisdom of God in Jesus and His gospel?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Testify with Scripture. Like John the Baptist's disciples, share with someone this week what you have seen and heard of Jesus through His Word.
- When doubts arise in your heart, read Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1-2 aloud and pray, asking God to steady your heart with the truth of Christ's works.
- Live as evidence. Intentionally practice mercy and kindness this week so that your actions display the wisdom and power of the Messiah (Matt. 11:19).

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 93 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 149 with your group, focusing on verses 4-5. Thank God for adorning the humble and the faithful with salvation in Jesus Christ.

Notes

