

Questions for Matthew 11:1-19

For Dennis Nilson

1. What was John's actual question? Was he doubting in Jesus after declaring him the Lamb of God? (Verses 1-3)

Dennis Nilson: "As John sat in prison,..discouragement and second-guessing began to set into John's thoughts (I'm sure satan was at work in this situation). We know that this is one of the chief tactics of satan,..to attack with doubt when a person is at their lowest. We saw that clearly demonstrated in Matt. 4:1-11 when Jesus was led into the wilderness,.. alone, hungry and probably feeling very human,..satan comes and tries to sow seeds of doubt in the Lord, Himself. So it's no surprise that he shows up in prison with John. In this vulnerable state John reasons; 'if my purpose was to prepare people for the coming Messiah' (3:3), and If Jesus is really the Messiah,..then why am I in prison when I could be out preaching to the crowds and preparing their hearts?' Jesus answered John's doubts by pointing to HIS acts of healing, raising the dead, and preaching the gospel,..with so much EVIDENCE, Jesus' identity,..was obvious (John 10:37-39)

Bart Shaw: "In these verses we see that even a person of great faith can have moments of doubt and confusion. It is hard to find someone who had more emphatically affirmed his belief in Jesus as the Son of God than the Baptizer—see Jn. 1:29. But like Abraham (who married Hagar when he had not had a son of promise), Job's wife (who said 'curse God and die'), King David (who killed Uriah), and Peter (who denied Christ), John exhibits a moment of indecision and loss of faith. We should not find this troubling, indeed rather we should find it reassuring that the scripture does not hide the warts and cosmetic flaws in the men and women of the scripture. We know by this unsparing honesty that the Bible is divinely inspired because ordinary men would not have written such words. Most importantly we know that the Christ was without sin.

Bill Smith: "Read an interesting suggestion that I'd not considered, the possibility that John the Bapt. sent 2 of his disciples to Jesus for their benefit. The idea that John the Bapt's disciples needed to hear for themselves the words from Jesus. Amazing the answer Jesus gives them in vs4-6, and even more amazing the testimonial Jesus begins in vs7 and ends in vs15 on John's behalf.

A.) I don't believe we have enough information to know for sure. The text is pretty plain, "are you the Coming One or do we seek another?" We could assume that is all there is to it, but that is rarely the case with scripture.

B.) Although some believe John was doubting or confused, and after months of being held in prison maybe he was. I don't however believe John doubted based on John.1:29-36. Maybe he knew his disciple's needed to be following Jesus, maybe knew his time was about up, maybe wanted his disciples to see their future.”

Austin Maddox: “John the Baptist seems to be a long-forgotten figure at this point in time. His ministry had not been all that long ago, and yet we have not heard from him in quite some time. Keep in mind though, that John the Baptist was in prison. And as the days drag on, John is still not freed, the kingdom hasn't come yet and many of the things that John preached would happen through the Messiah have not happened yet. Matthew 3:11-12. Was there a little doubt? Perhaps. What was he really asking? Why. Why are things going the way that they are? Perhaps, why am I still in prison? He knew who Jesus was, but it wasn't going perhaps the way that he thought that it would. He knew that Jesus was of God, he had heard of the works that he was doing.”

For Matt Kudrna

2. Did Jesus actually answer John's question? Is this a rebuke of John? (Verses 4-6)

Matt: “John knew the scriptures; he knew the words of Isaiah that say, “Behold, your God will come with vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you. 5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. 6 Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.” Jesus did not quote this verbatim, but the similarities cannot be ignored. Jesus must have been quoting the prophecy. Hearing this, John would rest easy knowing that Jesus was “the Lamb of God who takes away sin.” As for the second question, Jesus was typically clear whether His responses were rebukes. He used phrases such as “Woe to you” and “Get behind Me, Satan” when He chastised someone. This appears to be a genuine answer aimed to soothe John's worries.

a. Many have doubted their faith. I would say we all have questioned it at one point. Notice Jesus does not gaslight John and shame him for lacking in blind faith. Rather, he provides evidence, which is exactly what the Hebrew writer says faith requires in Hebrews 11:1. We are given no indication that John acted in a sinful manner when he asked this question. May we have the boldness to ask the same and seek evidence from the scriptures and from history to confirm the truth of who Jesus is.”

Bill Smith: “A.) No, Jesus didn't come out directly and answer yes/no, BUT He

did tell John's disciple to go back and tell John about the things they saw and heard. Jesus is showing John's disciples who He is. Actually Jesus is fulfilling passages like Isa.35:5-6, which Isaiah said would follow the Messiah.

B.) I don't believe so at all. Seems Jesus is saying enough to John's disciples to assure John would understand the words and works of Jesus.”

Levi Shaw: “Yes. He listed his amount of miracles for his credibility as the messiah. As for the “blessed is he who is not offended because of me” he wants John not to take offense that he hasn’t openly declared his messiah role.”

Loren Gorrell: “Jesus answered the question with scriptures John would understand confirmed Jesus as the Messiah. Coffman points out Jesus had to assure John that He was the Messiah without a blunt statement that encourage those who would rebel against Roman rule. It was not a rebuke but encouragement to John to hold fast to what he already knew and proclaimed.

Jesus pointed to the miracles and good things happening, things that previous prophets identified as messianic indicators.

Isaiah 60:1 good tidings to the poor

Isaiah 35:4-6 blind eyes opened, deaf ears unstopped, lame leap like a deer”

Bart Shaw: “Jesus’ answer to John is somewhat oblique, but it rests on the principle that miracles were given so that men might believe. As to whether it is a rebuke, I think yes, it is a mild reprimand. John had great and illuminating access to the first hand demonstration of Christ’s power living in the first century than Christians since. He saw the Spirit descend as a Dove and he heard God the Father’s declaration of the Christ. Jesus gently reminds John of the proof which he had already seen.”

For Grant Zane

3. How does Jesus’ description of John perfectly sum up his personality and divine mission? (Verses 7-10)

Grant: “In these verses Jesus asks three times, “what did you go out to see?” When He asks this question, Jesus suggests three different options. First, in verse 7, Jesus suggests “a reed shaken by the wind”. It seems that Jesus is asking if those who went to see John the Baptist went to hear him and only expected to hear something as common as a reed blowing in the breeze. If this was the case, then the people would likely not have bothered to go. This helps the people to realize that what John said should be taken carefully or no value should be put upon it. Since the people went to listen to John, it is foolish to think his words were without value. Secondly, Jesus suggests in verse 8, that

what the people went to see in the wilderness was a man in soft garments. Immediately following this, Jesus points out that this could not have been the case since those who wear such clothing live in kings' housing and this would not reflect where John was located, that being in the wilderness, nor the fact that he was feasting on wild locusts rather than eating food from the king's table. This shows the people that John was not living a life for worldly, physical benefit but rather that his purpose was a spiritual one. This then brings Jesus to the third possibility, in verse 9, that what the people expected to see in the wilderness was a prophet. Jesus follows this option by confirming that John was a prophet and even goes further by claiming John's actions fulfill the prophecy from Malachi 3:1, which is quoted in the following verse. By doing this, Jesus shows two things. First, that John's actions and teachings should be considered carefully since he speaks as a prophet from God. Secondly, Jesus shows that since John's actions are a fulfillment of the prophecy from Malachi, that the people should be careful to look for the one that is to follow after him. This very clearly shows the transition that is taking place from those that were following John should now transition to following Jesus. John made this announcement (as was seen in John 1:29) and Jesus here confirms this is what is happening."

Austin Maddox: "John was not a weak, well dressed goody two-shoes that was easily swayed by the opinions of the time and a pleaser of the people and a puppet of the rich and powerful. John was a prophet in every sense of the word! If you were looking for a prophet, there was not one any better than John the Baptist. At the same time, John was much more than just a prophet in the vein of Isaiah, Jeremiah or the many others that God used. John was a prophet of prophecy! He was prophesied to come and prepare the way for Christ to come onto the scene! In a large sense, just as Jesus' ministry wasn't what many people thought it would be, so John's was not exactly what the people were looking for when Elijah would return."

Bill Smith: "Bill Comments: The words of Jesus are asking rhetorical questions, describing the opposite of what John was; STEADY NOT as a reed in the wind vs7, lived a DISCIPLINED LIFE, NOT ONE of luxury as a man clothed in soft garments vs8, a prophet, no MORE THAN A PROPHET vs9. John was solid, instead of focusing on self he was likely making assignments to his followers like these 2. Soft garments? Those are reserved for kings."

For Tres Stone

4. Why is the least in the kingdom of heaven greater than John? In what way are they greater? (Verse 11)

Tres: "In reference to Mt. chapter 11 verse 11 which reads, "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. (NKJV) First pointing out the utter importance of John's purpose in opening the way for the Son of God. Both John and Christ were both prophesied about a number of times. The central context here is the superiority of Jesus Christ and His Gospel, compared to the Law of Moses. All the commentators that I read about this passage had in their own way come to the same conclusion. Also, contextually, when the kingdom of heaven is mentioned at the end of the verse it is best understood to be in reference to all in the Lord's Church. Here are some good verses Job 14:1, Isa 40:3, Mal 3:1, Joh 1:15; 3:30 among many others."

Bart Shaw: "The point about John the Baptist is that although he played a very special role in Messianic history -- a role itself foretold as one who would prepare the way for Messiah -- he was not actually fortunate enough to enter into the Church of Christ. Just as Moses was prevented from entering into the land of Canaan, so too was John prevented from entering into the Church established on the day of Pentecost. Was John's role a greater honor than being in the Church? No! John's honor and distinction is insignificant compared to the privilege and glory that we are all given as believers grafted into God's family. We are made co-inheritors with Christ in His kingdom.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. (Eph 1:3-6)."

Austin Maddox: "I think Jesus is pointing out that what we think is greatness and what God views as greatness are 2 different things. It should also tell us just how important the kingdom truly is. The Hebrew writer later on would capture this exact sentiment perfectly.

Hebrews 11:38-40, "(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

The world wasn't worthy of the men and women of faith, but God provided something better for us, that being the promise, the kingdom, the blood of Jesus Christ and remission of sins! We have the privilege of being a part of something that John could only pave the way for! Being separated as we are from the time period, I think we forget how special we are!"

Loren Gorrell: “We know more about Jesus, about His mission and His kingdom. We have our sins forgiven, while John could only have his rolled forward under the Old Testament.

Romans 6:4 – we walk in the newness of life

Romans 6:5 – we are united with Him in death and resurrection”

Landon Shaw: “While he established the link between the OT promises and their function, it was preliminary to the new order of the kingdom introduced by Jesus. As great as he was he must be classed with those who preceded the kingdom and its blessings. As so the privileges and blessings that the least experience are much greater than the limited experiences John had. But this is not because of Achievements or worth. It is a contrast between the Old and New orders.”

For Mahlon Miller

5. In what way had the kingdom of heaven suffered violence and the violent had taken it by force? (Verses 12-15)

Mahlon Miller: “In what way had the kingdom of heaven suffered violence?

There are several different takes on this from various commentators. One suggests that the violence was from external factors outside the kingdom, so violence from outsiders such as the Pharisees and others that sought to do harm to the early Christians. We know there were many different factions around this time and some animosity brewed between the religious groups. And often times there were hostilities against the followers of Christ. Persecutions did happen probably more frequently than they do now.

Another way the kingdom might have suffered was from the multitudes that were very eager to bring the new gospel message. Some of these people may have unintentionally hurt the message, because they were forcing it, perhaps their attitudes were wrong.

So perhaps it was a mixture of both ways meaning both external and internal conflicts in the kingdom.”

Loren Gorrell: “Zealots and many others expected the Messiah to return Israel to its previous greatness as a physical kingdom. John 6:15 – some wanted to make Jesus king then. They wanted the kingdom on their terms and on their timetable. They did not comprehend the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom.

Bill Smith: “Bible writers consider this a very difficult verse to translate. One interpretation is that the violence suffered the kingdom could be considered the actions of the scribes, pharisees, and other leaders seeking to physically

destroy John and Jesus. This would certainly be an example of violence suffered the kingdom of heaven on earth.

It is suggested by some that the, "violence had taken it by force" is the idea that the kingdom is forcefully pushing forward and that honest people are wanting to be part of that movement. Luke 16:16 suggest that, "since the time of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it."

Bart Shaw: "This reference cannot refer to anything but the opposition of the Jews to the message of God. They had always resisted it. They threw Joseph into the well and debated killing him before selling him into slavery. They persecuted and rejected Moses. They killed the prophets and stoned the faithful. They set themselves up as bloody merciless rulers and judges over Israel and dictated law to the masses. Instead of mercy, they demanded sacrifice. Even now, like Jonah, they resisted the message of Christ and would reject with anger the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles.

47 Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48 In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. 49 Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' 50 that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation.. (Lk 11:47-51).

Austin Maddox: "Mike Criswell comments: "Fowler gives another interesting possibility under the passive category. He says the verse may refer to the overanxious crowds who actually try the kingdom into existence forcibly before its time. John 6:15 stands as a case in point. By their anxiousness, these people are actually doing harm to the Messianic cause. Fowler goes on to describe the situation like a rose bud that suffers at the hands of the person who in his eagerness to experience its fragrance tries with his fingers to force the bloom. He also proposes that perhaps John's inquiry is a result of this attitude. If so, then the passive is appropriate to the preceding context."

Ultimately, he thinks a slightly different approach that kingdom itself is vigorously pressing itself forward and sincere honest people are forcing their way into it with eagerness, but states that in the end the interpretations overlap somewhat. In my estimation, Fowler's take seems very plausible, but I wouldn't have a strong view one way or another. Both views seem to hold water."

For Loren Gorrell

6. Describe the meaning of the analogy Jesus uses to show the double standard of the Jews. (Verses 16-19)

Loren Gorrell: “The scribes and Pharisees wanted to be the boss. They rejected John, his teaching and austere ways. They also rejected Jesus who was not ascetic. They rejected His love for all people, His miracles and His teaching. They were fault finders and complainers who would not commit to follow either man, which were both doing the will of God in different ways.”

Bart Shaw: “The key phrase in the analogy is verse 19: “But wisdom is justified by her children.” What does this mean? It means that your cooking recipe is only shown to be valid by the tasting of the end product. If the pie is nasty, throw away your recipe. Another way to say it is “The proof is in the pudding.” The real worth, success, or effectiveness of something can only be determined by putting it to the test. It’s all bluster and show with superficial appearances until the final grade comes back. The braggart will eventually be found out as a faker. Jesus’ version of this idea is ‘wisdom is justified by her children’. How can you identify wisdom? It is known by its children. When the children are grown, then you know something of the parents. Many a demon has been sent out into the world by self-proclaimed “perfect” parents who confessed innocence as to their failure in parenting. The Jews made a big noise with lots of shouting and clamor. They were never satisfied with the prophets God sent them. They said you didn’t do this right, you didn’t do that right! You didn’t dance, you didn’t mourn! They endlessly protested and plotted to overthrow God. Were they right in their criticism of God? Take a look at their children. Their children came home in AD 70 and their names were destruction, displacement, and Divine demolition.”

Dennis Nilson: “Basically Jesus is condemning the hearts and attitudes of HIS generation. By their refusal to open their hearts and minds to the indisputable, scriptural evidences of Who He was,..they have created,..and placed themselves in a no-win situation. No matter what Jesus said or did,..they took exception to it. They were cynical and skeptical because HE challenged their comfortable, secure, and self-centered lives. I see this as them committing the 'unforgivable' sin (Matt. 12:31 & 32),..which is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. They were exhibiting a deliberate (and most likely irreversible) hardness of heart by their refusal to acknowledge the Deity of Jesus (in spite of all the signs that they were aware of to that fact). It is 'unforgivable' because the path or door TO forgiveness must begin with acknowledgement and acceptance of the fact that Jesus IS, INDEED the Christ of God. Only then can one have access to the mercy and forgiveness God offers.

Matt Kudrna: “Did Jesus drink alcoholic wine? This question is logically proposed when the parallel account in Luke 7:33-34 is read. “ 33 For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon!’ 34 The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’”

a. I do not believe the focus is on what Jesus was eating and drinking, rather with whom he was doing it. The idea is that nothing was good enough for the Pharisees. John abstained from any social pleasantries, and they called him crazy. Jesus gladly sat for a meal with those who needed redemption, and they called him a reprobate. Jesus did not keep Himself from any typical Jewish food or drink of that day.

b. We need not apply the words “bread” and “wine” after the second instances of “eating” and “drinking” because Jesus saw no need to place them there. Though it can be inferred that since Jesus says John did not drink wine and that He is being accused of drunkenness, He did partake of some wine, this would be an incorrect placement of emphasis on the point being made by the Lord.