

Does John the Baptist Have Doubts?

Matthew 11:1–15

(black Bibles page 816; Children's Bibles page 1174)

Series Introduction

- “Who are you?” “Are you the chosen one?” We’re used to questions like these – questions about *identity* – appearing in movies and books.
- This series on Matthew 11—16 is all about that question, because in the middle of Jesus’ ministry everyone was grappling with the question of Jesus’ identity.

1. Who is Jesus? (11:1–6)

- A surprise... John the Baptist has doubts? Wow, is the Bible honest.
- Verses 4-5: Jesus answers somewhat indirectly, by pointing to his life-giving miracles and preaching to the poor. His language echoes prophecies like Isaiah 61:1–2.
- Verse 6: “Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.” *Everyone* will be disappointed with Jesus, sooner or later... including you! But hang on, He knows what He’s doing.

Excursus: The Miracles of Jesus

- These are so important in Jesus’ ministry (see Matthew 8—9!), but to those uncertain that the Bible is God’s Word and completely true, they bring up obvious and important questions about how we can know whether they really happened.

- Most historians and scholars of Jesus and early Christianity now readily admit that Jesus was a “miracle worker” – even *non-Christian* historians and scholars. (!)
 - Why? Because a careful examination of all the relevant historical sources reveal this constant theme. *The miracles are not a later legend.* Even ancient non-Christian sources, such as Josephus and the Jewish Babylonian Talmud, attest to Jesus as a miracle worker. We have no ancient record of anyone denying Jesus as a worker of wonders.
 - So what are the non-Christian explanations of Jesus’ power? There are two main ones: Jesus was a sorcerer and was doing these things by the power of the devil (Matthew 12:24; the Talmud); or the modern explanation, that Jesus healed people through *psychosomatic* effects. Yet the psychosomatic explanation fails where Jesus controlled nature, such as the miraculous calming of the storm, or the three times Jesus raised someone from the dead.
- ### 2. Who is John the Baptist? (11:7–15)
- Verses 7–10: If John the Baptist has doubts, perhaps he’s not a real prophet after all? Jesus corrects any such thinking: “A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet...” (verse 9)
 - Verses 11–13: The kingdom of heaven is great indeed, and yet, surprisingly, violent men are interfering with it. *And that’s why John is in prison.* The kingdom of heaven will be established with miracles, yes, but also in weakness and suffering. (Jesus will die.)
 - Verses 14–15: Note Jesus’ way of speaking... and keep listening. Keep thinking. Keep *following*.