

# Does Jesus' Rejection by Men Negate His Claim to Be Messiah? *A Negative Response from Matthew 11.2-19*

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- 2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,
- 3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?
- 4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:
- 5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.
- 6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.
- 7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?
- 8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.
- 9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.
- 10 For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
- 11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.
- 12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.
- 13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.
- 14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.
- 15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.
- 16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,
- 17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.
- 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.
- 19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Jesus' rejection by men does not negate his claim to be Messiah. In Mt 11.2-19, Jesus affirmed this in answer to the doubts that rose in John the Baptist's heart while he was in prison. Jesus supports his case for Messiahship, in spite of popular rejection, for the following reasons:

1. His rejection by men is overshadowed by his fulfillment of Old Testament Messianic prophecies (vv 5-6).

*"... Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see..." (v 4).*

Jesus answered the critics' voice by pointing to the myriad of miracles that he had performed in fulfillment of Old Testament Messianic prophecies. His works of physical healing, raising the dead, and gospel preaching all properly identified him as the Messiah (see Is 61.1-2).

2. His rejection by men is related to their lack of receptiveness of prophets in general (vv 7-14).

*"... Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist . . ." (v 11).*

Jesus pointed to the fact that reception by the populace is no guarantee of divine commission. He cited the example of John the Baptist, whom he acknowledged as the greatest member of the human race (v 11), He was the messenger of Christ (Is 40.3; Mal 3.1); he was the Elijah that was to come (Mal 4.5), If the people had been receptive, they would have received him without reservation.

3. His rejection by men is related to their unwillingness to hear the message of God (vv 16-19).

*"... this generation . . . is like unto children sitting in the markets . . ." (v 16).*

Jesus argued that men were fickle and immature as children (vv 16-17). John lived a life of disciplined abstinence; he was accused of being possessed by a demon (v 18). Jesus did not refrain from mixing with publicans and sinners; he was dubbed a glutton and winebibber (v 19). Neither extreme satisfied the desires of the people, for they would not be pleased with the message of God.

4. His rejection by men is rendered unreasonable in the light of reality (v 19).

*"... But wisdom is justified of her children" (v 19).*

Jesus' final argument was that popular opinion does not determine truth. Truth is not subject to majority vote. Therefore he said, "wisdom is justified of her children." By this he meant that those who exercised wisdom would be rewarded by its fruits; those who received him would surely be rewarded (Mt 10.40; Jn 1.12), regardless of whether others rejected him.