

# How to Respond to Jesus

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Date: 23 June 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ] What shall we do with Jesus? We can reject Him. We can accept Him. But whatever we do with Jesus today is our response to Him. We can choose to believe in Him, or in one way or another, we can choose not to believe in Him. The passage we read together in Luke 11 from verse 14 to 36 contains three responses to Jesus, two of them constituting responses of rejection and one of acceptance. Now, our response to Jesus today will be conditioned by the way we see Jesus.

In verses 33 through 36, Jesus talks about how our eyes are the lamp of our body. They give light to the insides, as it were. The way we see things changes our response to Jesus.

If our eyes are spiritually healthy, we will see Jesus for who He really is, Messiah, King, and Savior. But if our eyes are spiritually unhealthy, we will see nothing in Jesus to draw us to Him.

Well, our passage begins in verse 14 with a miracle of Jesus. Jesus casts out a demon which had robbed a man of His voice. The man can now speak, and when He does, the people are amazed. But what are the crowds really seeing here? And how shall they respond?

How do their spiritual eyes view the miracle of Jesus? If they have spiritually healthy eyes, they'll view this miracle as further confirmation of Jesus as Messiah, King, and Savior, and they will believe and trust in Jesus. But if their spiritual eyes are unhealthy and darkened, they won't see anything in Jesus to draw them to Him. And no matter how great the miracle He may perform, they won't believe in Him. In light of this, surely our prayer today must be this.

[ 2 : 23 ] Lord, give us healthy spiritual eyes today, so that through the preaching of Your Word, we may see in Jesus our Messiah, King, and Savior, and we may believe and trust in Him.

And so we read in verse 14 that all the people marveled. But then in verses 15 and 16, we read of two wrong responses to Jesus. But some of them said, He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, while others, to test Him, kept seeking from Him a sign from heaven. The first response, those who attribute to Jesus' demonic powers are saying, no, not ever, I will never believe in Jesus.

And we read of how Jesus deals with them in verses 17 through 26. The second response, those who want Jesus to give them a sign from heaven are saying, no, not yet, Jesus needs to do more to earn my trust. And we read of how Jesus deals with them between verses 29 and 32. Both are wrong responses to Jesus. The right response to Jesus is found in the short passage between them in verses 27 and 28. When replying to someone who shouts out, how blessed Jesus' mother is, Jesus replies, blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it. The right response to Jesus is to hear His Word and to believe in Him. The words and works of Jesus are, in other words, enough for us to put our faith in Him right here, right now. So we have three responses to Jesus. No, not ever in verses 14 through 26. No, not yet in verses 29 through 32.

And yes, right now in verses 27 through 28. And this morning, having prayed that God would give us healthy spiritual sight right now, we'll consider all three. May it be as we hear that it's the third response, that as we hear the words of Jesus and see His works, all of us this morning will enthusiastically respond and say, yes, Lord Jesus, right now I will believe and trust in You.

[ 5 : 19 ] So the first response from verse 17 to 26. No, not ever the first response to Jesus. Not ever.

For all their religious exactness, the Jewish religious leaders were very superstitious. Beelzebul was a foreign god. The name they deserved for the prince of demons. Literally, the name Beelzebul means Lord of Flies. It's onomatopoeic. Beelzebul, the name the Lord of Flies.

And in their superstitious minds, they attributed Jesus' miracles to the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, the Lord of Flies. For foreigners, Beelzebul was the equivalent of Satan for Jews.

We read in verse 17 that Jesus knew their thoughts, and He said to them, every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan is also divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Now, it's obvious, don't you think? Sometimes it takes obvious to show how ridiculous an argument is. Jesus' words blow their arguments clean out of the water that Satan, under another name Beelzebul, should fight against Satan. And He goes on and says, and if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? He's probably referring here to the Jewish exorcists who we know practiced at the time, however successfully or not, we don't know. The point is, if Jesus is casting out demons by the power of Satan, they must be also. And again,

Jesus is using obvious to destroy His opponents' arguments. He clinches the matter by saying, but if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Jesus has used the obvious argument twice already, and He uses it again. The only reasonable explanation for Jesus' supernatural ability to cast out demons is that He is manifesting the power of God.

[ 7 : 52 ] He is destroying the power of Satan with the greater power of God. To paraphrase verses 21 and 22, Jesus is overcoming the devil. He is defeating the strong man with the superior power of God.

All the miracles Jesus performed were designed to show that the kingdom of God has come with Him, that Jesus the King has begun the process of ushering in a new age of salvation and hope through faith in Him, the new age of restoring broken lives and shining in the world the glory of the grace of God and the gospel. And to use that word obvious again, Jesus challenges His opponents saying, whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. In other words, He's saying to all who are gathered there, and He's saying to us today, whose side are you on? To which kingdom do you belong? One or the other? The kingdom of Satan?

Or the kingdom of God? The kingdom which breaks lives? Or the kingdom that restores lives? Now, to belong to the kingdom of God is not a matter of smartening one's act up and getting rid of things we know to be wrong. It's not a matter of moral reformation. From verses 24 through 26, Jesus knows that what we need is spiritual transformation. We need to fill our hearts with the kingdom of God so that there's no room left for the evil things we once loved to do.

Let's go back to Jesus' question in verse 23. The kind of response highlighted in this passage defies all logic. It's the kind that says, I don't care what evidence you provide for Jesus being Messiah, King, and Savior.

I am not going to believe and trust in Jesus. No, not ever. When someone refuses to believe despite all obvious argument, it is a sign that there are deeper issues involved. All these people had seen Jesus perform a miracle, and yet they refused point blank to believe in Him. It's a sign that there were deeper issues, which meant that it wasn't just that they couldn't believe. They didn't want to believe. For many of the Jewish leaders who adopted this position, what lay behind their refusal to believe in Jesus was that it meant they would have to give up their allegiance to the Jewish rabbis, relinquish political control, lose all their friends and their place in the community. They weren't willing to do any of these things, and so to give their rejections a respectable edge, they argued with Jesus. But we see their rejection of Jesus for what it really is, do we not? They don't want to believe in Jesus. To believe in Jesus would require too much for them.

[ 11 : 15 ] The cost would be too great. In sharing the gospel, we're going to find this rejection in many different guises. Some will say as we share the gospel with them, I'm just not listening. Speak to the hand, the face ain't listening. Others will say, oh, religion just causes wars. Don't tell me about religion. Still others will reject Jesus because there are deeper things in their lives they don't want challenged. They don't want to give up a sinful lifestyle. They don't want to lose control.

They don't want their reputations tarnished. They don't want to admit they've been wrong. People from other religions, understandably, they don't want to give up their families. They don't want to give up their friends. In our gender-confused society, it's really obvious why the Christian message is rejected. It's not an intellectual rejection. It's a moral rejection.

But for whatever reason, this person will respond to the gospel of Jesus by saying, no, not ever. Despite all I know to be true, I am not engaging.

And even if they do engage, it will be to accuse Christians of being naive, medieval, and bigoted. The obvious will fly out the window to be replaced by superstition and pride.

Now, I'm sure we've all met people like this, and perhaps some of us were like that at one time also. But the grace of God overwhelmed us and broke down our defenses. The stronger power of God overcame the weaker power of our moral objections. And for the first time, we saw in Jesus and His cross the glory of the love of God. Maybe there are some in our family who say to us when we challenge them about not being Christians, they say to us, no, not ever.

[13:21] And it's a desperately sad response, and we grieve for them because we love them so much. But let's never give up hope, because if God can change us, He can change them also.

No, not ever. Second response to Jesus. No, not yet. Verses 29 through 32. No, not yet.

There were some in the crowd who witnessed the miracle of Jesus expelling the demon from this mute man who wanted to test Jesus by demanding a sign from heaven from Him. They wanted a greater sound than Jesus' miracle. They wanted a devastating, cataclysmic, heavenly sign, like, for example, the sun to do a gay gardens in the sky, or the clouds to spell out the Aramaic name Joshua, Jesus.

They're doing it because, as we read in verse 15, they want to test Jesus. That's the tactic of many of Jesus' enemies in the gospel. And ultimately, we know where their desire to test Jesus comes from.

In Luke chapter 4, we looked at this about two years ago. Jesus has led into the desert to be tested by Satan. Perhaps we shouldn't be so surprised that Jesus uses religious people to put Jesus to the test. He did then, and Satan is still doing it today.

[14:48] If the arguments that Jesus used against the previous groups can be described as obvious, the argument that Jesus uses against this group can be described as direct. He says to them, this generation is an evil generation. An evil generation, sometimes direct as necessary, actually to be told the truth by the Son of God as a kindness.

Now, if you were a Jew listening to Jesus, these words, evil generation, would have been familiar. Back in Deuteronomy chapter 1, when 12 men were sent to spy out the land of Canaan, 10 of them came back with a discouraging report, with only two holding on to the promise of God.

So, the wandering Israelites chose not to enter the land of Canaan. They didn't believe God's promise, and therefore, they all, with the exception of the two good spies, died in the wilderness during the 40 years of their journey. God had given them His promise that that land would be theirs. He had given them the blessings of redemption from their slavery in Egypt, but they did not believe. So, in Deuteronomy 1 verse 35, we read these words, where God says to them, not one of the men of this evil generation shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers.

By using these words, evil generation, Jesus is accusing those who were seeking a sign from Him as being entirely as unfaithful to Him as their ancestors were, and He's warning them of the condemnation of God upon them.

He goes on to say, this generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. Now, we all know the story, right? Jonah, the prophet, was sent to preach a message of repentance to the Gentile city of Nineveh, but having decided to go in the opposite direction, he spent three days in the belly of a big fish. After being spat out on dry land, it was as if he had returned from the dead, and having arrived at Nineveh, the Ninevites listened to Jonah and repented.

[17:13] And Jesus says, Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation. And Jesus here is referring to the greatest of all signs of His being Messiah, Lord, and Savior, namely that having been crucified and lain dead for three days in a tomb, He's going to rise to new life. And through His apostles, He's going to preach the gospel to the Gentile world, just as Jonah did to the Gentile city of Nineveh.

And then Jesus talks about the Queen of the South, a reference to the Queen of Sheba, who traveled hundreds of miles from the Arabian Peninsula to hear the wisdom of Solomon, the king. The people to whom Jesus is speaking here in Luke 11 are listening to a greater wisdom than that of Solomon, and yet they will not listen, and they will not repent.

Yet, we get Jesus' point, do we not? What greater wisdom do the people need or want than the presence of Jesus with them? And what greater sign do the people want or need than that of His resurrection from the dead, together with the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, resulting in hundreds of thousands of Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior? So, to His listeners, His Jewish listeners see in Luke 11, Jesus is being ultra-direct.

No, not yet. More is required than God has already provided. I need more evidence of who Jesus is and the truth of who Jesus is being ultra-belief. And the truth of His resurrection from the dead before I believe in Him.

[ 19 : 09 ] How many thousands of young people have grown up in the Free Church of Scotland and have said, no, not yet.

And they think Christianity is for old people. And when I get to be an old person, then I'll think more about it. But now I want to sow my wild oats.

And I want to have fun. Or it might just be that they're more convinced by the arguments of the society in which they've grown up, with its allusion to party time, the American dream, gender-confused issues.

More convinced by that than the claims of Jesus. But for whatever their reason, their response is, no, not yet. I remember speaking to someone like this, someone I deeply loved, a member of my family, who said, I will not believe in Jesus unless He should appear physically before me.

What greater wisdom and sign do we need than what God has already provided in Jesus and His resurrection?

[ 20 : 22 ] You know the problem with the now, not yet responses? But the not yet becomes never. Never. The now moment never comes and the opportunity to respond in faith to Jesus is gone.

It's a terrifying thought that so many thousands of our young people were once so very close to Jesus, as close as our young people are today, but are now so very far away from Him.

But you know there's hope for any here who are saying, no, not yet. You're here today as the gospel is being preached and you have another opportunity to put your objections to the side and embrace the truth of Jesus and His resurrection.

How many times did I hear the gospel being preached before I responded in faith and trust? I heard it thousands of times being faithfully preached.

And I thought, no, not yet. But then a day came when God's love broke through my defenses and brought me to see my need of Jesus.

[ 21 : 30 ] Even today, there is time to avoid the fate of this evil generation to whom Jesus refers. Even now, Jesus offers Himself.

Do not reject Him, lest on the last day all these people of Nineveh rise up together with the Queen of Sheba to condemn you.

No, not yet. No, not ever. No, not yet. And finally, and briefly, from verses 27 to 28, the third response, the right response to Jesus.

Yes, right now. Yes, right now. So we have two wrong responses to Jesus. One attributing to Him devilish power, the other demanding a further sign. And these two surround the right way in which we are to respond to the gospel power and resurrection of our Lord.

In verse 27, 28, we have this very curious incident of a woman in the crowd crying out, Blessed is the womb that bore you in the breast at which you nursed. Now, that cry itself, again, is not right.

[ 22 : 41 ] It presupposes that family and blood confer advantage in the kingdom of God. That to be Jesus' mother or to be His brother or to be His cousin confers some advantage.

That's what really matters and we don't need personal faith and trust in Jesus Himself.

Unfortunately, it's a response that so many have. My parents were Christians, so I must be a Christian, right?

Going to McDonald's doesn't make you a Big Mac with extra cheese and no gherkins. And being brought up in a Christian family doesn't make you a Christian. Many of the most brutal things in the world have been done in the name of Christianity by people who claim to be Christians because they were brought up in a Christian country and a Christian family.

But in verse 28, Jesus presents us with the right response to Him. He says, Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.

Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it. This isn't the first time Jesus has said something like this. Back in Luke 8, 19 through 21, having been told that His mother and brothers are waiting for Him, Jesus said, My mother and brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it.

[ 24 : 07 ] The right response to Jesus today consists in this. Hearing the Word of God and keeping it or doing it.

It consists first in hearing the Word of God. Earlier we referred to spiritual sight. Now Jesus talks about what it really means to hear the Word of God or to see Jesus for who He is.

Those who respond to the message of the Gospel saying, No, not ever. will do everything they can to avoid hearing. They will never darken the door of a church and they will refuse to engage with us as Christians.

Those who say, No, not yet, may be more nuanced in their actions. They may be sitting next to you this morning. And they may be happy to talk about Christian things, but for all that, they're still not really listening and hearing the Word of God.

The people of Jesus' day wanted flashes and bangs in the sky and Jesus' response to them is this, The Gospel does not consist in what you see with your eyes.

[ 25 : 16 ] Listen carefully. The Gospel does not consist in what you see with your eyes, but with what you hear with your ears. If you're looking for more than the Word of God you hear with your ears, you will always be disappointed because the power of God to transform us is found in His Word.

It's through His Word the living Christ is speaking to us today, pointing us to Himself as Messiah, King, and Savior, convincing us of our need for Him, and drawing us to see the beauty of Christ in the resurrection.

And in light of this, surely our second prayer from this passage must be, Lord, give me healthy spiritual ears today that as I hear Your Word I may believe and trust in Jesus as my Messiah, my King, and my Savior.

But it's not enough just to hear the Word of God. It's not enough for someone to hear a file arm going off. We must hear its warning and make for the exits.

It's not enough to hear the Word of God. We must keep it. We must act upon what it says. The parable of the seed and the sower reinforces Jesus' point. All four heard the Word, but only one did what it said.

[ 26 : 38 ] Only one resulted in a fruitful harvest. We hear the Word of God and we do it. That's the right response. Having heard the good news of the Gospel, having heard the wisdom of Christ and the call of the resurrection, we put our faith and trust in Jesus.

Having been convinced by the sign of Jonah, the resurrection of our Lord, and having been drawn to the kingdom of God with its promise of healing for the brokenhearted, we give up our objections. And finally, after all these months and years of saying, no, not yet, turn our lives over here and now to Jesus as Messiah, Lord, and Savior, and become Christians.

What shall we do with Jesus today? We're presented with three main responses to Jesus in this passage. No, not ever. No, not yet. And yes, right now.

Which of these three best describes your attitude to Jesus and His gospel today as if He was standing in front of you? Which of these three describe best the way you are seeing and hearing Jesus today?

[ 27 : 59 ] Today, the living Christ calls every one of us, what will you do with me? What will you do with me?

How then will you answer Him? I'll add one two after being in the Ven buses