

Come, Lord Jesus ...3) As Messiah

Matthew 11:2-11 • 2022-12-11 • Advent Series: "Come, Lord Jesus"



At times something can be overhyped. You might hear about a book, a movie, or an event. It may sound like the greatest thing since color film, but ends up failing to convince people that it is really worth all the hype. This is what apparently happened for the Disney company with a movie saga. It planned to have the John Carter movie series be the next big thing like Star Wars. They hired an award-winning director, picked a best-selling novel, and invested hundreds of millions into production and promotion. But it turned out that most people weren't interested in seeing the movie. It wasn't that bad of a movie. Critics didn't hate it. But despite the millions of advertising dollars, people just weren't interested in another space saga at that time. The movie ended up losing over 100 million dollars and the whole series was cancelled.

I'm sure you're familiar with something being over-hyped like that and then failing to convince people it is really cracked up to be all that great. But does this ever happen with the hype around the coming of Jesus? I don't mean the over-hyped commercialism and the way some play constant Christmas music and decorate their homes for Christmas with so many lights it looks as if they are trying to set up an air landing strip for an international airport. I'm talking about the way people talk about Jesus as the Messiah. Might someone ever begin to feel like that message is over-hyped? Might we be tempted to think it isn't really worth all the attention too? That's what started to happen to John the Baptizer and his followers. And today we consider Jesus' response to John and his disciples in Matthew 11. And we find out why we can say with all genuine excitement, "Come Lord Jesus, as Messiah."

If there was anyone who worked hard to get everyone excited for Jesus' coming, it was John. He has dedicated his entire life and purpose to getting everyone ready for Jesus' coming. And to do that he wasn't putting up lights and displays. He was out in the wilderness preaching. He lived a humble and hard life. But his efforts paid off! Large crowds of people came to hear his preaching. People from all over Judah came just to hear John and be baptized.

And then the moment they had been waiting for came. John had been preparing people for the coming one. He called him the Messiah, the anointed one. The Messiah was the one chosen by God to bring in a new era and a new reign of joy, peace, and restoration. And John wasn't the only one building up the hype about the coming Messiah. He was the last in line of all the Old Testament prophets in pointing people to him.

Then the day came. John could actually point his disciples directly to Jesus. And he said to all the crowds who had been waiting in eager expectation, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is the one I spoke about who would come after me! I have seen and I testify that this one is the Son of God!" He pointed to Jesus.

But, Jesus? Jesus didn't appear like some grand hero who would bring on sudden and extraordinary joy, peace, and restoration for Israel. He was just an ordinary looking man. Some of John's disciples went off to follow Jesus and find out more. Others, it seems, had trouble moving on. Was John perhaps overplaying the importance of this man Jesus? Was Jesus' coming overhyped?

Events didn't play out the way John and his disciples might have expected. A few months later we find that John had been arrested. Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee, held John in his prison in order to silence him. Just imagine how that looked to John's disciples. John was supposed to be the forerunner to the Messiah, and he was just sitting in prison. And what was Jesus doing about it? If the Messiah was going to come and bring joy, peace, and justice, why couldn't he rescue John? This all didn't seem to add up in the minds of John and his disciples.

Sometimes we can get caught up in our own thinking about the Messiah. We hear about how Jesus is the "prince of peace" and how Jesus is the answer to all the world's problems. But then we might begin to wonder if that is really the case. Like John and John's disciples we don't find Jesus bringing us comfort and joy in the way we might have hoped. Perhaps we are not sitting in prison. But we quickly find out that serving Jesus doesn't always lead us to a high and happy place. It sometimes leads us to a very low place. You might try to point others to the importance of Jesus, and they might believe you for a time. But soon they end up dismissing him. They aren't convinced by the hype.

Do we sometimes find ourselves buying that idea? Is Jesus really the Messiah we want or expect to come? Why can't Jesus fix your failing vision? Why can't Jesus fix your faltering finances? Why can't he restore your fortunes to give you sudden and complete joy? We can get caught up in our own thinking about Jesus and foolishly join the crowds in thinking he isn't everything we were promised he would be. We have our doubts about the work of Jesus. We hit the hard times. And the message gets hard to share to a sin-hardened world that isn't looking for a man like Jesus to be their Savior. We turn to the thoughts of our own hearts and we gaze at our own pitiful circumstances.

But instead of merely going to our own foolish hearts and minds, we can turn to another source: the Word.

When John or his disciples were struggling with doubts, John sent his disciples to Jesus. *“When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples³ to ask him, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’* John sent them to the Word in the flesh.

Where do you go when you have doubts about Jesus? Turn to him and his Word. You will find the answers there that you seek. John’s disciples had one more lesson to learn from their teacher. When you wonder about Christ, go to Christ looking for truth and for answers.

And in order to answer their doubts, Jesus did the same. He didn’t flatly say, “I am the Messiah who was promised to come.” Instead, he wanted everyone to examine the Word. Jesus pointed them to several parts of prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. *“Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.”* We read some of these prophecies in our Sunday service today. In Isaiah 35 read about the Messiah who would do all these things. Jesus was opening the eyes of the blind so they could see. Jesus was making the lame walk. Jesus was healing the diseases of the sick. Jesus was causing the deaf to hear. Jesus was raising the dead!

But Jesus came to do far more than that! All those were signs from prophecy which pointed to what Jesus was preaching. He wasn’t giving money to the poor. Instead, he was giving the poor just what they needed: good news. *“Good news is preached to the poor.”* That good news was centered on his work as Messiah!

Jesus came as Messiah. He came so lowly that apparently even John struggled with his doubts. But he came to fulfill Scripture. It was part of God’s plan of salvation that the lowly servant of the Lord would come. Isaiah foretold the one born of the virgin who would be “God with us.” And the Psalm we read earlier today (Psalm 146) talks about the Lord as the one who does all the things Jesus was doing. Jesus was the Son of God, born to live in lowliness.

Because of such appearance many thought he was overhyped or overrated. Because he came to do far more than give us physical riches, many thought he wasn’t the Messiah they wanted. But he came in lowliness to give us far greater riches! That is why Jesus had to say, *“Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”* You could also translate that as *“Blessed is the one who does not take offence at me.”* The man, Jesus, our Lord, is not over-hyped!

Does his lowliness offend you? Do you stumble at the type of joy, peace, and restoration he brings? Listen to his Word! He came to bring blessing to all the world by his life and death. And by his rising from death, he assured all that his plan cannot fail. His forgiveness is yours. His peace is yours. His promised everlasting joy is yours. You will find there is no way you could ever over-hype the joys of belonging to the kingdom of Christ! Everlasting joy because of his life and death to bring us forgiveness and everlasting life!

Isn’t that the type of message you want? After all, why do you read the Bible and listen to God’s Word in preaching and teaching? Is it because you want to hear the overhyped message of some politician or hero who will give you temporary wealth? Is it because you want a preacher or message that will make you feel good about yourself because it follows the latest trends? No. Those people and things are always overblown. We don’t want those weak things.

Then why do you read the Bible and listen to preaching and teaching? Isn’t it because we hear the message of the prophets fulfilled as they point us to Jesus? Prophets like John point us to the lowly Lamb of God who had to die for sinners. The Scriptures don’t change with the trends of the day. Their message remains the same that we are sinners and in desperate need of more than sight, healing, or money. We need God to fix the source of our issue: our sin! We need a Messiah who will forever put away our sins and give us the gift of life in place of the curse of death. The Scriptures point us to the one who would offer up the sacrifice for the sins of the world and rise again in victory.

So, is the message they give us about the Messiah’s coming over-blown? Not when you look at what you have in Christ. Jesus said that John was an incredible man. John had been sent by God to be the greatest of all the prophets who ever lived. *“Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.”* But, John didn’t fully have what you now have. John was killed before Jesus completed his mission. But you have the Word of Christ fulfilled! The Messiah has come. Jesus says that even the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. Your status through faith in Jesus is greater than even the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets. You are part of the kingdom of Christ in the New Testament Church. You will join with John and all the prophets who built up the hype about the Messiah. And even if you consider yourself lowly, you are no longer.

Disney realized it couldn’t create its own smash-hit space saga merely by trying to hype it up. So, about a year after the John Carter series failed to take off, they bought the Star Wars franchise. You can’t make something merely by trying to build up excitement. It must be the real thing. Jesus as Messiah is the real deal. The excitement and hype are never over the top for him. He fulfills all of Scripture! He brings all he promised! He has come! He will come again!

We pray today, “Come Lord Jesus, as Messiah.” With the full certainty of faith built on Scripture that he is our Messiah. He has come. And when he comes again, we will see, be strengthened, and made alive. We will live forever in his kingdom of peace, joy, and full restoration. Until then we pray in confidence “Come, Lord Jesus, as Messiah.”