



celebrate

12-22-13 – Advent Week 4

## Be Blessed

Matthew 11:2-11

### Introduction

*Ripley's Believe It or Not!* was created by Robert Ripley. He dealt with bizarre events and items so strange and unusual that readers might question their authenticity. His “Believe it or not!” was on radio and television, in comic books, had special museums, and became a book series. The interesting thing about his strange items and facts was that he never said they were always true, he left it to the audience to “Believe it...or not.” With some things in life it doesn’t matter whether we believe they are true or not. However, we will see today that there are other things we must believe are true if we are to live as God intended.

**Matthew 11:2-11** New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>2</sup> *John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus,* <sup>3</sup> *“Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?”*

<sup>4</sup> *Jesus told them, “Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen—<sup>5</sup> the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.<sup>6</sup> And tell him, ‘God blesses those who do not turn away because of me.’”*

<sup>7</sup> As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. "What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind?" <sup>8</sup> Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people with expensive clothes live in palaces. <sup>9</sup> Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say,

*'Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
and he will prepare your way before you.'*

<sup>11</sup> *"I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is!"*

*"Believe it...or not."*

### **1. Jesus is *the* Messiah in both word and deed.**

- Verses 2-3: John had heard about the ministry of Jesus while he was in prison. He sends his disciples to find out if Jesus truly was the Messiah. John was honestly seeking the truth. He wanted to know if Jesus was the one prophesied about in the Old Testament.
- Verses 4-5: Jesus tells the disciples to go back and tell John what they have seen and heard. Jesus' ministry points to the truth that He is the Messiah. His words and miracles are spoken and performed so that people will know Jesus is the Messiah—the Son of God.

In this time period, the Jews were expecting a Messiah, but there were groups of Jews who expected Messiah to come in different ways for different purposes... Believe it... of Not?

To these groups Jesus was offensive – they turned away because of Him...

**Sadducees:** wanted the status quo – Messiah who would keep peace with Rome and Jews

**Zealots:** freedom fighters – wanted a military hero – opposite of the Sadducees

**Pharisees:** fanatics of the Law – added laws to protect from sin – policed the Jews

**Essenes:** monastic group – separation from everything other than God

## **2. God blesses those who faithfully do the work He has called them to.**

- **Verse 6:** God promises to bless those who believe and place their faith in Jesus. Those who do not believe stumble. Blessing (blessed) is linked to the knowledge that God is working to guide and direct us in the right path. Those who acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah understand the truth of God's Word and are led by Him.

### **The Message...**

*<sup>4-6</sup> Jesus told them, "Go back and tell John what's going on:  
The blind see,  
The lame walk,  
Lepers are cleansed,  
The deaf hear,  
The dead are raised,  
The wretched of the earth learn that God is on their side.*

*"Is this what you were expecting? Then count yourselves most blessed!"*

- **Verses 7-11:** John was the forerunner to the Messiah. Because John would die before Jesus' death and resurrection, the crowd would witness the actuality of God's kingdom.
- God promises to guide and direct the lives of those who believe and follow Him.

## **3. We must be willing to surrender and embrace Jesus' way of life in order to be blessed.**

- God does not force us to believe or follow Him. He has given us the free will to either accept or reject Him. We must choose whether or not we will follow Jesus, the Messiah.
- The world's way is different from the way of the Messiah. We must choose which way we will go with our lives.

- Despite the things Jesus said and the miracles He performed, people still did not believe who He said He was. Today there are those that, despite hearing the truth, still will not believe. It's up to you to - **“Believe it ... or Not!”**
- For those who do believe and surrender their lives to God, He promises to guide and direct their lives.

**Proverbs 3:5-6** – *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.”*

Expectations haven't changed all that much in over 2000 years ... The way the four groups prepared for the first Advent is much like we today prepare for the Advent of His second coming. What are you expecting from your Messiah?

**2013 Sadducees:** Accommodators – passionate about Christianity, but tame Jesus to be relevant and acceptable – service is trendy – Jesus is everyone's buddy, but no one's Lord

**2013 Zealots:** Battle for truth and goodness with Jesus – Reason for the Season in your face and demand every cashier to wish you Merry Christmas

**2013 Pharisees:** Black and white Christianity – They police the church and add rules to ensure everyone has the same zeal and motivation to keep the Word of God.

**2013 Essenes:** The world is a distraction from a real relationship with God – They are so heavenly minded, they are no earthly good to anyone. Not following Jesus in word and deed.

## **Conclusion**

God's blessing means that we receive God's grace and live under His care. To be blessed is to seek God's direction for our lives and have the faith that He is who He says He is and will do what He says He will do for us.

### **God blesses those who...**

**Put their faith in Jesus, the Messiah.** *"But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence."* (Jeremiah 17:7)

**Follow God's Word.** *"Joyful (blessed) are those who listen to me, watching for me daily at my gates, waiting for me outside my home!"* (Proverbs 8:34)

**Serve others.** *"And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"* (Acts 20:35)

**Persevere.** *"God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."* (James 1:12)

*"So, Jesus' answer to John is for us today. Do we take offense at Jesus? Does He meet our expectations? Are we preparing for a different messiah than God's Messiah? Does the Jesus life offend you? The truth is that if we really embrace Jesus' words and actions and reach to the least and lonely we may be offended. We may find ourselves with the wrong kind of people. We may find ourselves among folks who need to know the good news of the God who comes. Are you willing to celebrate Christmas by acting mercifully like Jesus? Are you willing to be blessed by surrendering your expectations and embracing Jesus' way of life?"*

(CELEBRATE – An Advent Experience - p. 60)