

Responding to John's Testimony

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we do thank you so much that you have not left us alone in this world to wonder who we are or how we got here, but you have spoken to us most fully through your son, the Lord Jesus, and then given us your word, which points us to him and tells us who we are.

Father, we ask now that you would give us minds to understand your word, but more than that, hearts that would live in light of it. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, some of you will know the TV program called Neighbours.

It's still running. And how one of the famous weddings with Kylie Minogue was filmed in our church. So I think I've got some photos. It was in the old church.

So you can see looking back there, I think there's another one with a close-up with the wedding dress. And you can't almost make out his big mullet at the back. And then on the next slide is out the front of the old church.

You might recognize some of the brickwork. Or not. It is. It's outside, just out there. But imagine someone even more famous than Kylie Minogue was coming to our church.

[1 : 1 4] Perhaps the Queen of England or Bill Gates. Someone who would use their power and wealth to bring us blessing. Perhaps give us a share of their empire or kingdom.

And to prepare their way, they sent a messenger ahead of time. And then one normal Sunday morning like this, we're all sitting here. Mid-sermon, perhaps.

The messenger stands up and says, Look, here they are. They're here in the car park. What would you do? How would you respond? Would you say, yeah, right? Sit down.

Be quiet. Or would you be a little skeptical, but not skeptical enough to still check, turn the head and check out for yourself? Would you do that? Or would you believe the messenger, drop everything and run out to greet them?

Perhaps get an autograph for a photo for the archives committee. Or perhaps see how they might give you a share of their kingdom. How would you respond?

[2 : 1 6] Well, the people of Israel had been waiting almost 400 years for someone even greater than the Queen and Bill Gates to turn up. They were waiting for God's promised King who would give them a share in God's kingdom.

And then last week we saw that the messenger of the King had arrived. It was John the Baptist. And he was, in verse 23, the one Isaiah prophesied about, the voice that cried out and prepared the way.

And we saw him last week testify that Jesus was the King, that he had arrived. And he wasn't just any old king, but a powerful king who would take away sins and establish God's kingdom that we could share in.

Last week, you see, verse 19, last week was all about John's testimony. Verse 19 tells us quite plainly. But this week, having heard the testimony, we now come to the response to see if people would say, oh, sit down, John, or whether they would check it out for themselves or whether they would believe straight away.

And the first to respond are Andrew and John. So we're at point one in your outline, verse 35 in your Bibles. Have a look there. The next day, John the Baptist was there again.

[3 : 31] He was in Bethany again. He was there. Verse 28 tells us he was in Bethany. But he's there again in Bethany with two of his disciples this time. John, when he saw Jesus passing by, he said, look, the Lamb of God.

And when the two disciples heard him say this, how did they respond? Well, they followed Jesus. John is here. He's again testifying to who Jesus is, the Lamb of God.

And how do the disciples respond? They follow Jesus. And now in verse 40, we're told that one of the disciples is Andrew, which is quite a good name, I think.

And the other disciple is not named, but I suspect it's John, not John the Baptist, of course, but John the Gospel writer who's writing this book. In all the other Gospels, he's always mentioned with Andrew.

He was one of the first disciples. And in the Gospel of John, he never names himself, which kind of fits here. So it's probably Andrew and John as the two disciples. But either way, when they hear John the Baptist say, look, the Lamb of God, they respond to the Baptist testimony by what?

[4 : 40] By leaving the Baptist and following Jesus. I remember being at a church camp a couple of years ago with the 1030 service and Tim Walker, who many of you know, dressed up as Minty Man.

Now, that meant putting a T-shirt on and getting Minties and sticky taping them to the T-shirt. And Jeff, our children and youth pastor at the time, told the kids, look, sometime today, Minty Man is coming.

You don't know when, but I'll tell you when. And when Minty Man approached, Jeff stood up and announced, look, it's Minty Man. And you know how the kids responded? They chased him.

They didn't just follow him. They chased him down, pummeled him and got all the lollies off him. The point is the kids responded to Jeff's testimony by following, not Jeff, but the one Jeff pointed to.

And it's just like the disciples here. And this response of following is emphasized by John the writer, who repeats the word follow in the very next verse, even though he doesn't really need to. But verse 38, turning around, Jesus saw them following.

[5 : 46] There it is again. And asked, what do you want? They said, Rabbi, which means teacher, where are you staying? They asked. Now here, Jesus turns around and sees them following.

That's their response. But he then asked, what do you want? Now, we need to realize this is not, what do you want? You know, a tone of exasperation.

Rather, it's literally, what do you seek? And their answer shows us that what they seek is to be one of his disciples, who not only follow him, but stay with him. And that's what the disciples did.

They would stay with the teacher and listen and learn from the teacher. And so that's exactly what Jesus invites them to do. Do you see verse 39? He says, come then, he replied, and you will see.

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent the day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. Now, the word stay here means remain.

[6 : 46] And John the writer repeats this word as well. Our translations say it says, spent the day, but it's literally remain or stay the day with him. So on the next slide, just to kind of help you see the emphasis here, it's, so they came and saw where Jesus was remaining, and they remained with him that day.

You see how John's trying to emphasize something here? It seems as though John wants us to realize that following Jesus means remaining with Jesus, listening to Jesus. And I say this not just because he repeats the word once in this verse, but because the word remain is big for John in his book.

So on the next slide, in John chapter 15, John records Jesus who says, and look how many times the word remain comes up, You see, following Jesus means remaining in Jesus or with Jesus, like a branch in a vine, sticking with him, listening to him, and not just on Sundays, but on every day.

Indeed, we cannot bear fruit or please God unless we remain in Christ. And so I wonder what we see here in John chapter 1 is a glimpse of this, where Andrew and John not only follow Jesus, but remain with Jesus.

But they do more than just follow and remain. Andrew also finds others to bring to Jesus. Do you see verse 40? Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said, John the Baptist had said, and who had followed Jesus.

[8 : 38] There's the word followed again. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, we have found the Messiah, that is the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at Simon and said, you are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas, which when translated is Peter. Now it's hard to know exactly the sequence of events here, or when Andrew found his brother.

Presumably they'd both come to see John the Baptist. And so they were in the same town. And so Simon wasn't too far away to get. And so perhaps once Andrew saw where Jesus was staying, the first thing he did was not get comfortable, but go and get his brother Simon.

That all three of them could remain with Jesus and listen to him. Either way, Andrew declares to his brother that they have found the Messiah. And John helps us to know what that means, because he says that is the Christ.

As you know, Messiah is the Hebrew word that is used in the Old Testament. And Christ or Christos is the Greek word used in the New Testament. And they both mean anointed one or king.

[9 : 53] Some years ago I was doing a children's talk at an old church, and I introduced myself as Andrew Price, and one of the kids thought I had said Andrew Christ. And so when I was talking about the Christ or the king, he was getting confused.

Is that you? I said, no, thank you for the compliment, but no, far from it. The point is he thought Christ was a surname. And that's often what people think, isn't it?

I used to think that growing up as well. But Christ and Messiah are titles like doctor or reverend. And the two titles mean the same thing. The king, the anointed one.

And so Andrew tells Simon they have found the long-awaited king whom God promised to send. And when someone comes, Jesus renames him Cephas or Peter, which means rock.

In Matthew chapter 16, on the next slide, Jesus says, In other words, it seems as though Jesus here in John displays some supernatural knowledge that he knows whom Peter will become.

[11 : 00] Peter will become the main gospel preacher to the Jews. And on Peter's preaching, Jesus will build his church. And so that's why he renames him.

But the point here is that Andrew not only follows and remains with Jesus, he also finds others to bring to Jesus. This is part of his response to the testimony of John the Baptist.

Well, in the next scene, the Baptist disappears, but we still see two more people responding in a similar way, Philip and Nathanael. So point to verse 43. The next day, Jesus decided to leave for Galilee.

Finding Philip, he said to him, Follow me. It seems even Jesus finds people to follow him. Although when he calls someone to follow him, he has immediate success, doesn't he?

Unlike Philip in verse 44. Have a look at verse 44. Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. So they've gone back home. And Philip found Nathanael and told him, We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law and about whom the prophets also wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

[12 : 15] Nazareth? Can anything good come from there? Nathanael asked. See, like Andrew and Jesus, Philip also finds someone else, this time Nathanael.

But unlike Jesus, Philip doesn't have immediate success, does he? He said, Nathanael doesn't believe his testimony and follow immediately. He said, Philip's experience at this point is probably more like our experience, if we've ever shared the gospel with people we know.

In my experience, some people are very skeptical of it when I share with them, like Nathanael's a bit skeptical. For some people I speak to, it's the resurrection of Jesus that they can't quite believe, that they're a bit skeptical about, even though there's actually pretty good evidence for the resurrection.

But for Nathanael, it's not the resurrection, it hasn't happened yet, it's the town that Jesus came from. That's the problem. He doesn't know at this point that Jesus was actually born in Bethlehem, that the very town that the Old Testament said the Messiah would come from, he just hears Nazareth and thinks, no way, nothing good can come from that place.

And it was a small town, I think even today it's reasonably small. On the next slide, this is the best photo I could get, it's not very clear, but it's kind of situated just above a valley, and you see in the back, well maybe you can see in the background, a valley and another town.

[13 : 36] It's just kind of nestled above the valley there, and it's not a huge, you know, it's not a huge town, nothing to note really. In fact, as many of you know, I'm from Sydney, and when I first moved to Melbourne, I had to have an interview at St Paul's Cathedral with some of the bigwigs from the diocese, and one of them said to me, you know, the only good thing about Sydney is the road to Melbourne.

The love was overwhelming. I must confess, I was tempted to remind them that that's kind of what Nathaniel said about Nazareth, but look who came from Nazareth. I just kept my mouth shut.

But notice how Philip responds. He doesn't give up. He just says, well look, come and see for yourself. It's as though Philip says, that's fine, you don't have to believe my word, but check it out for yourself, and listen to Jesus' word.

And Nathaniel does. So in verse 47, when Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching, he said of him, here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.

Jesus again displays supernatural knowledge, doesn't he? As he did with Simon. At this time, he knows that there is no deceit in this Nathaniel, in this particular Israelite. You see, there would have been some who came to Jesus with deceptive motives, not to genuinely see if he was the Messiah or Christ, but to trap him.

[15 : 05] And that's what the Pharisees did. They weren't really coming to Jesus to see if he was the king or not. They just wanted to trap him, to kill him. Or others would come claiming to follow Jesus as the king, but would stop as soon as he didn't do what they wanted him to do.

As soon as he wasn't the type of king they wanted him to be. And we'll see that later on in John's Gospel. Even today, people visit churches not really interested in finding out if Jesus is the king and saviour or not, but just to get their Easter and Christmas religious fix.

They feel good about themselves for another six months or so. But Nathaniel doesn't come with deceptive motives. He comes genuinely looking to see if Jesus is the Messiah or not.

But the question for Nathaniel is, how can Jesus know whether he has deceit or not? They've never met before. How can Jesus know anything about him? And so he asks in verse 48, How do you know me?

Nathaniel asks. Jesus answered, I saw you while you were under the fig tree before Philip called you. Then Nathaniel declared, Rabbi, you are the son of God.

[16 : 20] You are the king of Israel. Nathaniel now believes that Jesus truly is the Christ, the king. And his faith, it's not a blind faith, but it's a faith based on evidence.

And here the evidence is these mini miracles of Jesus who knew him as someone without deceit and then saw him under the fig tree. But Jesus actually goes on to say that they will witness even greater evidence than this.

You see verse 50? Jesus said, You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that. He then added, Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man.

Jesus says they will see even greater things than those mini miracles. And these greater things include the other miraculous signs like turning water to wine, which we'll see next week.

But it also includes verse 51. They will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man. Now, at first glance, that's a really odd thing to say, isn't it?

[17 : 37] When I read it, I go, what? What does that mean? But it's a reference to our first reading where Jacob had a dream and he saw angels ascending and descending on a ladder to heaven.

Do you remember the first reading? And Jacob said that this place was the gate of heaven, the way to God, in other words. But here, Jesus is saying the angels ascend and descend not on a ladder, but on who?

On the son of man, on him. In other words, he is now saying that he is the bridge between God in heaven and people on earth. In fact, on the next slide, Jesus will say in John's gospel, he will say, I am the gate.

Whoever enters through me will be saved. Or more famously, in John 14, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. You see, Jesus is saying that he is the ladder, the gate, the way, to God in heaven. And the disciples will see this when they see Jesus crucified and rise again.

[18 : 48] For it is by his death that Jesus pays for our sins, is it not? So that we can be forgiven and given access to God in heaven. And it's by his resurrection he proves that he is both paid for our sins and is indeed the king opening the way to God.

What's more, in our first reading, Jacob also said that this place was the very house of God, do you remember? Or the temple of God. It's the place Jacob met God in his dream and heard God speak to him in his dream, if you remember.

But on the next slide, we read John saying, but the temple, the house of God Jesus had spoken of was his body. And so Jesus is now the place or rather the person in whom we meet God and hear God speak to us.

And the disciples will see all this in the life and words of Jesus. They will look at Jesus' character and listen to Jesus' words and as they do, they will see God's character and hear God's words.

We've already heard in John 1.18 that the Son is the one who makes God known to us. In other words, by referring to this event in our first reading, Jesus is saying he is now the one by whom God reveals himself to people and he is the means by which people can come to God and share in God's kingdom.

[20 : 21] This is how God would keep his promise to bless all nations on earth through Jacob and his descendants. And so just as Jacob exclaimed in our first reading how awesome is this place, the disciples will come to see how awesome is this person, Jesus.

So the question for us this morning is how are we responding, how are we responding to John's testimony? For these first disciples, it was John the Baptist's testimony that they responded to, wasn't it?

By following, remaining, and finding others to bring to Jesus. But we have even more testimony. We have the greater things that they saw recorded for us by John the Gospel writer so that we might believe as well.

In fact, this is the whole reason John has written his book. So on the next slide, John says, this is his purpose statement, Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book, but these are written, why?

Well, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. You see, this is John's purpose in writing his book.

[21 : 43] It's why the second verse is going to be on our title slide every week. So on the next slide, the title slide, there it is, that verse, the second half of the verse. He's written that we may believe.

So how are you responding to John the writer's testimony? Do you firstly believe that Jesus is the King, the one that God sent to die for us and rise again?

Or as Nathaniel put it, do you believe he is the Son of God? Because there is evidence to believe, like the eyewitness testimony of those first disciples who saw those greater things.

And there is good reason to believe because it's by believing in Jesus we can have life in his name. So have you responded to John the writer's testimony by firstly believing in Christ?

And secondly, if we do, then are we responding by following Jesus and remaining with Jesus? that is, do we follow him not just on Sundays but every day seeking to please our Lord or King by the way we speak and by the way we act?

[22 : 55] Or do we serve him on Sundays and then put him on the shelf for the rest of the week? Just last Friday I was driving down Springvale Road on my way to visit someone from church and I'd just chosen a hymn for our Wednesday at 2 service next week.

And so this hymn was in my head. It was that hymn that says Jesus is Lord Jesus is Lord praise him with hallelujahs Jesus is Lord Are you familiar with that one? I'm not going to sing it to you for your sake.

Anyway, I was playing this hymn in my head when a driver did something silly on the road and I let something slip out. So I was humming Jesus is Lord Ah you clown get off the road praise him with hallelujahs and then it occurred to me that what I was singing in my head wasn't really being lived out with my mouth.

You see following Jesus means remaining with him seeking to please him as our king not just on Sundays but every day and even on the road. And not just when times are good and God answers our prayers the way we want him to but also when times are bad and he does not answer well he answers the prayers but he just doesn't answer them the way we want him to.

You see we respond to John's testimony in his book not just by believing in Jesus but by following and remaining with Jesus. And thirdly we had to respond to John's testimony about Jesus by finding others to bring to Jesus.

[24 : 23] We saw Andrew find Simon Jesus find Philip and then Philip find Nathaniel three times in this short passage. Of course we cannot bring people to Jesus in the flesh like Philip did for Nathaniel but we can bring people to Jesus in his word as we speak the gospel word to them.

Now I realise that for most of us that doesn't seem as good does it? And sometimes I think if only my non-Christian relatives could meet Jesus face to face then they'd believe for sure.

But there's two things to remember. First even when people saw Jesus in the flesh they did not always believe did they? It didn't always work for them.

I think of the Pharisees they not only spoke with Jesus they saw miracles performed before their eyes and do they believe in Jesus? Nope. They try and kill Jesus. Seeing is not always believing.

So we mustn't rest everything on that if only they saw Jesus in the flesh. But the second thing to remember is that while God God sorry is that God has said he will call people through his message or word about Jesus.

[25 : 42] That is the gospel word about Jesus is God's power to save people. That's what God has told us. And so people don't have to see Jesus in the flesh. God will work as they see Jesus in his word.

For the word of God is living and active sharper than any double-edged sword we're told in the Bible. people and we're also told that the gospel is the power of God to bring salvation the gospel word the message and so people can meet Jesus in his word and that is how people are to come to him now.

And so pray then that God might give you opportunities to find people and bring them to Jesus in his word whether it's inviting them to church whether it's speaking something of Jesus from the Bible to them or whether it's simply praying that God might raise up others to speak God's word to them so that they can meet Jesus.

Pray for opportunities like that. Again I realise this is not always easy to do and some of us are better than others sometimes we miss the opportunity as well that God gives us.

Just two weeks ago we had a financial consultant come to us on my day off which usually means my brain is not well engaged and he asked me what made you become a minister? Talk about a golden opportunity.

[27 : 06] I could have said well you like to help people prepare for their financial future. I like to help people prepare for their eternal future by trusting in Jesus. That would have been a nice kind of link you know nice segue in.

I said none of that. I went blah blah blah. I can't even remember if I mentioned Jesus. It was hopeless. So don't ever ask me for advice on my day off. My brain doesn't work.

But the point is we may not say what we wanted to say but you never know how God will use us. So do pray for opportunities to bring people to Jesus in his word or to speak the gospel word to them.

For he is their king who is waiting to give them life eternal. If only they would believe. Well the testimony of John the writer will continue over the coming weeks.

But for us today the question is how are we responding? Will we believe? Will we follow and remain? And will we find others?

[28 : 06] As I said it's not always easy so let's pray that God might help. Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for your word to us this morning. We thank you that it testifies to who Jesus is.

that he is indeed the king that you have sent to die and rise for us. And in response to this testimony father we pray that you would help us not only to believe in him but to follow and remain with him and even for opportunities to find others to bring to him.

For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.