

Proclamation of the Kingdom – 2(Leader's Notes)RESPONSES TO THE MESSAGE OF THE KINGDOM

Follow the introduction on the worksheet, then divide the group into smaller groups to discuss questions 1-4.

### 1. RESPONSE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST:      UNCERTAINTY

(Write the best word describing John's response in these verses in the blank given above. Answers may vary.)

**Discuss**

What was John's response to Jesus?  
 John was the one who 'prepared the way' for Jesus.  
 Why do you think he asked this question?

John the Baptist had spent many years in the wilderness preaching about the coming Messiah. When he baptised Jesus he knew that this was the man. Now he was in prison and perhaps he was discouraged. He may have expected Jesus to conquer the Romans and save the Jewish nation, but He had not done that. Was He really the Messiah?

Jesus didn't answer a clear 'yes' or 'no', but rather points him to His deeds, the fruit of His ministry. Jesus is saying, "Look at what I am doing! This is a fulfilment of the prophecies spoke of by Isaiah." He doesn't criticise John for his uncertainty, but encourages him to believe. There are people like that today who wonder why Jesus doesn't heal their friend or answer a prayer. We need to encourage them to look at what Jesus has done.

### 2. RESPONSE OF KORIZIN AND BETHSAIDA:      UNREPENTANT

(After discussing the answers to the questions in this section look at the map to see the places Jesus spoke about.)

**Discuss**

What was the response of these cities?  
 What do these verses teach us about God's judgment?

Jesus compares two different places. First He compares Korazin and Bethsaida with Tyre and Sidon. Korazin and Bethsaida were two towns beside the Sea of Galilee that Jesus often visited, and where He often taught the people. Tyre and Sidon were two pagan cities along the coast of Phoenicia, to the north-west. Jesus had visited that area on one occasion, but we only read of one miracle there. Many of the people had come down to see Jesus in Galilee, but they didn't had the same opportunity as the other cities had. Jesus said that Korazin and Bethsaida would face greater judgment.

Jesus then compares Capernaum and Sodom. Sodom was the wicked city God destroyed in the time of Abraham, while Capernaum was the town where Jesus lived during His ministry. Matthew 4:13. Capernaum had the greatest opportunity to see and hear Jesus, and yet they rejected Him. Jesus said

God's judgment would be even greater than that of Sodom. God is just. He gives men opportunity to repent, but if they reject they are accountable for the opportunity they have had.

### 3. RESPONSE OF THE PHARISEES:      UNBELIEF

**Discuss**

What was the response of the Pharisees in the following three incidents?

a.) Matthew 12:1-2, 9-14

The Pharisees were very religious. They had added hundreds of interpretations to the Law of Moses, but Jesus and the disciples did not keep all their rules! His disciples were picking grain on the Sabbath Day. The Pharisees said that this was working on the Sabbath and broke God's Law. Jesus showed they were inconsistent. They would rescue a sheep if it fell into a pit on the Sabbath, but criticized Jesus for healing the sick on that Day. They refused to believe He had come from God – in fact they tried to find ways to kill Him.

b.) Matthew 12:22, 24-28

Now the Pharisees went a step further. They accused Jesus of using Satan's power. The word 'Belzebul' means 'lord of the flies', and was a word they used to describe the Prince of demons. Jesus said they were blaspheming the Holy Spirit in v31. They would be condemned by their own words. V37

Sadly there are Christians today who do not believe in the work of the Holy Spirit. We need to know the Lord and His Word, so we will recognize the work of the Holy Spirit, and what is the work of the enemy. Jesus told us that we will know by looking at the fruit. Good fruit can only come from a person who stores up good things in his life.

c.) Matthew 12:38-41

Jesus had performed many miracles but the Pharisees refused to believe. Now they asked for a special sign. God doesn't need to prove who He is. He knows what is in men's hearts and whether they will believe or not. Another sign may not change a person's heart, if he is already filled with unbelief. Just as Jesus pointed the Pharisees to the greatest sign – His resurrection, so we too can point people to what Jesus has already done.

### 4. RESPONSE OF THE CROWDS:      ASTONISHMENT

**Discuss**

What was the response of the crowds to Jesus' message?

'Many followed Him'      'All the people were astonished'

The people responded by asking the question, "Could this be the Son of David?" This was another name for the Messiah. The Messiah was to come from the line of David, and was often referred to by the Jews as the 'Son of David'. The crowds were attracted by the miracles, just as they are today. Sadly when the crowds heard what Jesus required of them, many drew back.

## RESPONSES: THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Matthew 13:1-23

Jesus knew there would be different responses to His message. It was during this time that He told the parable of the Sower and the Seed.



What are the responses to the message of the Kingdom in this parable that Jesus told? See v18-23

*(Look at the responses to the message in one group, rather than dividing again. Briefly see what kind of person each type of soil represents. The members can write their answers in the blank space provided.)*

Hard path	v19	This is the person who doesn't understand the message. The evil one snatches away the seed.
Rocky places	v20-21	This is the person who hears and receives the message with joy. However it only lasts a short time. When trouble and persecution come they fall away.
Thorny ground	v22	This is the person who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke it, and it is unfruitful.
Good soil	v23	This is like the person who hears and responds to the message. They produce a crop, some 30 times as much, others 60 times and others 100 times as much.

Jesus told this parable to the large crowds who gathered by the lake (13:1), but He only explained it to the disciples. When Jesus had sent them out to proclaim the Good News they would have met with different responses too. And we will too! What an encouragement to know that Jesus understood this, and to know that there will also be those who will respond and bear fruit. Let's press on and proclaim the message of the Kingdom.