

► **Read Luke 7:18–35.**

Today's passage begins with John the Baptist getting the latest news about Jesus from his disciples. They undoubtedly told him about the sick, paralyzed, and deaf being healed, demons being cast out, and the dead being raised to life.

1. What are the circumstances of John's life which require him to get news about Jesus secondhand instead of going to see him himself? (Lk. 3:19–20; Mt. 14:3–5)

2. What expectations does John have about the "one who is to come" (v. 19)? (Lk. 3:16–17)

3. Considering these circumstances and expectations, why might John have wondered if Jesus was really the "one who is to come" (v. 19)?

4. Perhaps you would expect Jesus to answer John's disciples with either a rebuke for unbelief or a direct answer declaring that he is the promised Messiah.
 - a. Instead, how does Jesus respond? (vv. 22–23)

 - b. How does this response help clear up John's questions?
Isaiah 35:4–6; 61:1–2

John 10:37–38; 14:11

5. Note that the Old Testament does not directly refer to the Messiah's raising the dead. Jot down the promises in the following verses that point to God's plan to conquer death, a plan that he ultimately accomplished through the Messiah.

Hosea 13:14 (1 Cor. 15:54–55)

Isaiah 25:7–8

6. Sometimes our own circumstances or expectations of God get in the way of our putting our faith and trust in him. If you've ever had this experience, how has God met you and encouraged your faith?
7. Verse 23 speaks of the person who accepts Jesus for who he is and what he does. What does this verse say is true of such a person? (v. 23)
8. After John's disciples leave, Jesus talks to the crowd about him. What sets John apart?
vv. 24–27
- v. 28a
9. Why is "one who is least in the kingdom of God...greater than [John]" (v. 28)? (📖* 1 Pet. 1:10–12)

At the beginning of his ministry, John said of Jesus, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1:29), but now in prison he isn’t quite sure who Jesus is. Are you surprised that Jesus does not seem insulted or put off by John’s doubts? Instead he says of John, “among those born of women there is no one greater” (v. 28). John fulfilled his calling as the herald of Jesus the Messiah and is commended by him. “But although he, as last envoy of the Old Covenant, is nearest to Christ and thus the most important of all, he takes a lower place than even the most insignificant member of the New Covenant.”¹ What a privilege is ours!

10. How did John’s ministry prepare the people to believe in Jesus? (v. 29; Acts 19:4;  Lk. 3:2–18)

11. Why do “the Pharisees and experts in the law” (v. 30) reject Jesus, the very one promised in the Law and Prophets? (v. 30)

12. How would you define “God’s purpose” for “the Pharisees and experts in the law” (v. 30) from the verses below? (Add other passages that come to mind and share them with your group.)
1 Timothy 2:3–4

John 3:17

13. Our passage this week finishes with Jesus’ evaluation of the people of his time. They compared the ministries of John and Jesus (Lk. 5:33), and criticized both. What fault did they find with each? (vv. 31–34)

Wisdom Is Proved Right by All Her Children (v. 35)

“... God (wisdom) had sent both John and Jesus in specific roles, and... this would be vindicated by the lasting works of both Jesus and John...”² To better understand “wisdom is proved right by all her children” (v. 35), read Matthew 7:15–20.

14. Given their criticism of Jesus, what kind of Messiah do you think the people want or have in mind?

Why is God’s plan SO much better?

Jesus refused to let the critique of this world shape his life and ministry. He knew that God’s ways would always seem foolish to an unbelieving world (see 1 Cor. 1:20–23). Sometimes God’s ways seem strange to us, even as they did to John. But to us who believe, Christ is the “power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24).

*📖 For further study

¹ Norvel Geldenhuys. *The Gospel of Luke: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 227.

² Kenneth Barker, Gen. Ed. *The NIV Study Bible, 10th Anniversary Edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 1455 (footnote on Matthew 11:19).