

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

John the Baptist's Doubt and Despair and Confusion

Last time...the raising from the dead of the son of the widow of Nain

This time...John the Baptist's doubt and despair and confusion...and Jesus' blessed assurance

We will be in Luke 7 again and in Matt 11

Luke 7

v18 disciples of John showed him:

Note that John the Baptist still has disciples, even though

- he pointed all his disciples to Jesus and proclaimed that he must decrease and Jesus must increase
- his ministry is "on hold"

Where is John?

In prison, taken by Herod Antipas after his foolish vow to the daughter of Herodias

According to Josephus, John was imprisoned in Herod Antipas' winter palace on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea... near where his ministry took place

In the timeline of Jesus' ministry, John has been in prison for about 6 months...facing the fate of all OT prophets – death

These disciples reported what to John the Baptist?

- Jesus' teaching...SoM...Constitution of the Kingdom of heaven
- Jesus healing the servant of the centurion from Capernaum... with merely His spoken Word
- Jesus raising from the dead the son of the widow of Nain

How does John respond to the report of his disciples?

v19 Art thou he...look we for another:

John the Baptist's reply might seem surprising

Let's re-acquaint ourselves with John the Baptist as we consider his reply

- his prophesied miraculous birth (to old parents in God's perfect time) and naming (by God)...[Luke 1:13](#)
- his being Spirit-filled from the womb...[Luke 1:15](#)
- the Divine calling upon his life...[Luke 1:16-17, 67-79](#)
- his ministry...[Luke 3:1-6](#)
- his bold and fearless testimony to the Pharisees, people, publicans, soldiers...[Luke 3:7-17](#)
- his baptism of Jesus...[Matt 3:13-17](#), [John 1:29-34](#)
- the consequences of his faithfulness...[Luke 3:19-20](#)

What are we to make of this question of Jesus in v19 coming from the mouth of the prophet who had faithfully and boldly prepared His way:

Are You He...Deut 18:15-19?

Are You the Messiah/Christ?

Should we be looking for another Christ other than You?

A man of like passion as us, it is safe to say that John was in deep agony

- discouraged by being imprisoned
- despairing of his life (about 33 years old)
- feeling hopeless...What's the point of all this?
- broken hearted and racked with doubt and confusion...this was not what he was expecting to happen (him or Jesus)

In his doubt and despair, is his faith in Jesus wavering?

or

Was John confused about the nature and mission of the Messiah?

Did John have the same Messianic expectation that the entire nation of Israel had...of a king to

- free them from the Roman oppressors and occupiers
- remove all wicked rulers and set up the kingdom of God

Was John, by asking these questions, appealing to Jesus to be the Messiah he and the whole nation expected?

Perhaps we will learn more as we consider how Jesus responds to him

v20-21 in that same hour He cured:

How did Jesus Christ initially answer the disciples/ambassadors of John?
In deed...by doing what God alone can do

With Divine power, curing many

- physically
 - infirmities...diseases and sicknesses
 - plagues
 - blindness
- spiritually
 - demonic oppression
 - demonic occupation

Then...with gentleness and simplicity...

v22 Jesus answering said:

After performing the answer to John's question, Jesus speaks the answer –
Go tell John what you have seen (My works) and heard (My words)

The works and words of Jesus Christ are unique...and they testify of His identity
Jesus has been and is doing the works of God and His Prophet/Messiah...
as foretold by the other prophets...Isaiah in particular

- Is 29:13-19 marvelous work – deaf and blind
- Is 35:3-6 blind to see, deaf to hear, lame to leap, dumb to sing
- Is 61:1-3 preach the gospel to the meek/poor in spirit

Therefore, Jesus ministered to His beloved Forerunner with...the Word of God
And in so doing, He restored John's faith, hope, and peace

faith must be fed by the Word of God, Jesus (Heb 12:2)

Rom 10:17 faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of
God

with faith comes hope and peace

Rom 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through
the power of the Holy Ghost

Phil 4:7 the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
shall keep your hearts and minds through
Christ Jesus

By referencing the Messianic prophet Isaiah, Jesus is teaching His Forerunner...
and those listening to Him speak to the disciples of John...
what “Christ” meant

Note: The missions (2 Comings) of the Messiah was a mystery to the
OT Prophets, of which John is one
The 2 Comings could not be distinguished, veiled by God until the
“fullness of time” when the 1st Coming was fulfilled
Jesus could not speak of His 2nd Coming until He clarified His 1st Coming
Until Jesus taught of His death and resurrection, the promise of His
2nd Coming would remain obscure
To us, the 1st and 2nd Comings are revealed in Scripture (Heb and Gr)...
but not to them

v23 blessed...not be offended:

Then, to comfort His Forerunner, Jesus encourages and assures him

Blessed...oh how happy...are those who

- do not stumble or trip and fall over
- do not doubt or disbelieve
- do not despair

when it comes to Me...

- God’s promised Messiah
- God the Savior (Is 43:3; Is 45:15, 21)
- God become man
 - come to fulfill the Law and prophets
 - according to God’s ways, not man’s (Is 55:8-9)
 - conquer man’s enemy – death, not Rome

Blessed are those who know with certainty His identity and are not shaken in their
faith, even when the mystery of God’s plan is being revealed and it is
unclear

- what He is doing
- when He will do the things He promised to do

How many people have stumbled on Jesus because in the blindness
(limitations, flaws in) of their human reasoning they

- cannot see His works and hear His words...”makes no sense”
- cannot accept His identity as God our Savior and Lord of all
- will not repent of their sins, agreeing with God by faith
- will not enter the strait and narrow gate and follow Jesus

The parallel passage is in Matt 11:2-6 and only differences are

- John is in prison (v2)
- John heard of the works of Christ (v2)
- again (v4)...He reminded John the Baptist of the prophetic Word in Isaiah!

This is important and very pertinent – again...

our need to be reminded of that which we have been instructed

This account of John the Baptist

- a Spirit-filled prophet of God, the one sent to prepare the way for the Messiah...
- heard an amazing report of what Jesus has said and done...
- racked with doubt and despair and confusion...
- questions Jesus about Who He is and what He is doing (maybe, not doing)

might seem surprising and out of character...

but it is neither

John the Baptist

- is a man of like passions as us
- needs to be reminded

Jesus answers the questions of His servant in deed and with the Word of God...

encouraging him to continue his course, not rebuking him

How did John respond to Jesus' answer to his questions?

It is not recorded...but John's character is

I believe he received the Word of God and it did not return back void but it accomplished
that which the Lord pleased, and it prospered *in the thing* whereto He sent it...

faith, hope, peace

such that John the Baptist finished well his course (as ordained by God)

This passage regarding John the Baptist's doubt, despair, and confusion is a message for us in
these days in which we live...we, who agree we must decrease and Jesus must increase,
often sound like John the Baptist!

We live after Jesus' 1st Coming...as Suffering Servant of God

before Jesus' 2nd Coming...as Conquering King of kings and Lord of lords

We live in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation

- murdered 55 M + innocent and defenseless babies
- 1st nation to legalize homosexual marriage...sweeping the globe
- call evil good and good evil
- truth has died in the street
- pervasive corruption by political, economic, and religious leaders

The madness and confusion of the world can lead to a deep agony like John's

- doubt
- discouragement
- despair
- frustration
- anxiety
- hopelessness
- confusion
- cynical, no longer confident that "the right thing" will be done anywhere
- perhaps soon, even being imprisoned (threatened by Dem candidate for POTUS)

And we cry out, questioning Jesus Christ!

"Do You see what is happening...are You going to do anything about it?!"

"When are You coming back?!!!"

(We are getting tired of waiting!!!)

What is the antidote?

The Word of God...to be reminded of the prophetic Word that

- encourages
- edifies
- comforts
- reminds
- feeds faith
- yields hope and peace

Heb 11:23-27 in the days of Egyptian oppression and slavery

2 Tim 4:18 the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen
(in the days of Claudius and Nero)

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world

Ps 19:7-11

Ps 2

Ps 86:7-17

Ps 89:18

Rom 16:19b-20 I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (sufficient) *be* with you. Amen

Titus 2:13 that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ

1 Thes 4:18 comfort one another with these words

Faith is fed by the Word of God

Rom 10:17 faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God

With faith comes hope and peace

Rom 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost

Phil 4:7 the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus

Luke 21:36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man

When we are discouraged, in despair, feeling hopeless...
will our doubt lead us to Christ or from Christ?

With the Word of God, we have faith, hope, and peace vs discouragement, despair, anxiety
and we can finish well our course

Let's gather in small groups to pray...in agreement with, in one accord with our Father...
to let the Holy Spirit write these words on our hearts and to transform our lives

Closing Song