

MATTHEW: THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

LESSON 29 – JOHN THE BAPTIST QUESTIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST– MATTHEW 11:1-15

JOHN THE BAPTIST QUESTIONS JESUS IDENTITY – MATTHEW 11:1-6

When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

John the Baptist had been imprisoned by Herod Antipas. He had been in prison for about one year. Matthew 14:1-4 explains how John landed in prison.

1. John had been in prison for about one year. Matthew 14:1-4 explains how John landed in prison. What did he say or do that caused Herod Antipas to place him into prison? Why was Herod afraid of John the Baptist?
2. How might prison have raised doubts for John?
3. For people who are married, when did you know that the person you married was “the one”? What tipped you off?
4. When you look for a new congregation, “church shop,” what are three things that may be on the top of your list?
5. Jesus does not offer John’s disciples any personal promises about what to expect for John’s imprisonment. Jesus does offer some encouragement for John in verse 6. How might these words help John and his disciples endure?
6. Read Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1. How do Jesus’ words answer the question about whether he is the one or not (see the mighty works of Jesus in ch. 8-9)?

7. Interpreters have wondered if John sends the disciples for his own needs for verification or for the benefit of his disciples who have watched their leader languish in prison. How does the grammar of verse 3 answer the question about who is really asking the questions?
8. What can be helpful for us to witness John's movement between faith, doubt, and back to renewed faith?
9. Jesus is the arrival of the kingdom of heaven, and John the Baptist imprisoned is a reminder we are yet still in a world of sin. Good news is arriving in a world in need. Faith in Jesus happens in the a paradox. How do we explain to people are trust in Jesus while evil men remain strong (1:21 and 10:24-39)?
10. What kind of "prisons" people experience will tend to bring out doubts regarding Jesus? In these periods of discouragement what most renews your courage and faith?

SIGNIFICANCE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST - MATTHEW 11:7-15

Historical moments occur that reveal God's presence and work in this world. These moments will be difficult for us to identify, but God sends prophets to identify these moments. We look now to the inspired Scriptures to understand God's mighty deeds that led up to the revelation of Jesus as the savior.

Jesus points the people to see John the Baptist as a prophet, as more than a prophet, that helped the people identify God's mighty works. John the Baptist served as a prophet to point people to see the coming of the Messiah. If we look to John to teach us how to become holy ourselves by our own morality, then we miss the point of the prophet.

11. Jesus asks three rhetorical questions (11:7-9) to help the people figure out what they had been expecting from John. Jesus then provides the answer in 11:10. Who was John the Baptist according to Jesus?
12. Read Malachi 3:1. The messenger prepares the way, announces the advent of the king. The messenger prepares the people to receive the king. How did John prepare the people?
13. Matthew 11:13-14 is an announcement by Jesus that the time of prophecy has come to an end. What was the purpose of the prophets? Why is this purpose no longer needed?

14. What response does Jesus ask of the people in 11:14-15?

15. What do “ears” have to do with responding with trust (11:15)?

16. God’s prophets and messengers face opposition, persecution, and are even killed. These OT voices rang out until the time of fulfillment has begun. God’s royal rule is being reestablished in Jesus. How does 11:4-5 show us the purpose of the royal rule of Christ?

17. John languishes in prison, Jesus’ ministry is opposed, and people continue to suffer. These are not the ingredients people expected the royal rule of God. God will use these truths to show our salvation being accomplished on the cross. God’s royal deeds are hidden both then and now. How does suffering for the sake of devotion to Christ, self-denial patient endurance out of love for another become moments of revelation God’s specific promises of forgiveness and life?