

Series: Stand Fast In the Lord

THERE HATH NOT RISEN A
GREATER THAN
JOHN THE BAPTIST
MATTHEW 11

Text: Matthew 11:11

Matthew 11:11

¹¹ Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Introduction:

In this passage John the Baptist is in prison.

Herod who had taken his brother's wife a woman by the name of Herodias, and had married her. John had preached publicly against this vile and unlawful relationship and he had been arrested and thrown into prison by the king.

Herod would have executed John, but feared the public backlash, because the people accepted John the Baptist as a prophet sent from the Lord.

While in this prison, John began to have some doubts and concerns about who the Lord was and what He was doing.

John's doubts worked against his faith and caused him to question the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

There are times when we all experience doubts and fears. There are times when we wonder about our salvation and about our faith.

It's at this place John finds himself and the Lord sent John just what he needed to encourage him and persuade him of the truth.

Note:

Sermon Content:

1. JOHN'S DOUBTING (VS. 2-3)

Matthew 11:2-3

² Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, ³ And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

Notice:

A. What John Doubted In Prison – “Art thou He that should come or do we look for another?”

In his prison, John had come to doubt the very person of Jesus.

This is the same John who was so bold in his preaching concerning Jesus.

Matthew 3:11-15

¹¹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: ¹² Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. ¹³ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

¹⁴ But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? ¹⁵ And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

John 1:27-36

²⁷ He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

²⁸ These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. ²⁹ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of

God, which taketh away the sin of the world. ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. ³¹ And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. ³² And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. ³³ And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. ³⁴ And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. ³⁵ Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; ³⁶ And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

John 3:25-36

²⁵ Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. ²⁶ And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. ²⁷ John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. ²⁸ Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. ²⁹ He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must

decrease. ³¹ *He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. ³² And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. ³³ He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. ³⁴ For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. ³⁵ The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. ³⁶ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

There was a time when there was no doubt in John's mind, but when he was thrown into the prison, he began to doubt.

Note not only what John Doubted in Prison but also:

B. What John Discovered in Prison

John discovered that absence doesn't make the heart grow fonder.

Matthew 11:2

² *Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,*

John is locked up and he can no longer see the Lord Jesus as He heals and ministers.

He can no longer hear the Lord's voice as He preaches and teaches.

John is removed from the sights and sounds of the ministry of Jesus and his heart has become clouded with doubts and questions.

Illustration:

To those who say that they can worship the Lord in their home or somewhere else, need to understand there is nothing like being in the presence of God and His people in the place of worship.

Note not only what John Doubted and Discovered in Prison but also:

C. What John Did In Prison

When doubts arose in John's heart, he did the right thing, he turned to Jesus for the answers he needed.

Instead of wondering and worrying there in that prison, John turned his efforts toward getting an answer from the Lord.

That is where help will be found in a time of doubt!

Why did John doubt?

I think there are many reasons, but there are three I'll share with you.

- Discouragement

John was a man used to the wide open spaces of the desert; now he finds himself locked away in a dungeon. John was used to his liberty, now he finds himself bound in chains and fetters. This confinement in a situation he could not change caused him to entertain doubts that normally would not have received a welcome in his mind.

How many times have we found ourselves here?

We find ourselves in a situation we cannot change.

We find ourselves with a problem we cannot solve.

We find ourselves dealing with circumstances from which we cannot escape.

When that happens, we sometimes begin to doubt too.

Beware of discouragement; it can devastate your life.

Discouragement can cause you to doubt everything you know and believe!

Not only does discouragement bring doubt but also:

- Disappointment

Possibly John thought the Lord would come and rescue him.

The Lord could do anything and He could have set John free.

When Jesus didn't rescue John, perhaps he grew disappointed and began to doubt.

John knew Isaiah 61:1:

Isaiah 61:1

¹ The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

Again, we probably wouldn't admit it, but when the Lord does not do what we think He will do, or what we ask Him to do, there is a tendency for us to become disappointed with Him.

Have you ever entertained this thought: "The Lord did this for so and so; I don't understand why He won't do it for me!"? This disappointment can lead us to doubt Him, if we are not careful.

Not only does discouragement disappointment bring doubt but also:

- Disillusionment

Matthew 11:2

² Now when J^{ohn} ***had heard in the prison the works of Christ***, he sent two of his disciples,

As the reports filtered into the prison of the miracles and the preaching of Jesus, John was waiting for the big news.

He was waiting for the day when one would come and say, “John, Jesus is the Messiah! He not only heals the sick, raises the dead and causes the blind to see, but now He is about to attack Rome and set us free!”

That is the news John and all Israel were waiting for.

Understand:

John found himself locked in this prison of doubt because he listened to his own doubts and fears.

When you listen to what you think; what you feel; what you see; or to what your heart tells you, you are in trouble!

You cannot trust your eyes; they don't see everything.

You cannot trust what you feel; because we are called to walk by faith not by sight or feelings.

You certainly cannot trust your heart; it is a liar.

Jeremiah 17:9

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

We must come to the place where we simply trust the Lord, even when we cannot trace what He is doing.

Often, during the trials of our lives, we will not see the Lord do the things we think He should be doing.

We have considered John's Doubting note also:

2. THE LORD'S DISCLOSURE (VS. 4-6)

Matthew 11:4-6

⁴ Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

⁵ The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

A. The Lord Answers Him (vs. 4)

When the Lord hears the disciples of John and their questions; He does not send back a stinging word of rebuke.

When the Lord hears the doubts that have gripped John's heart, the Lord responds with patience, grace and love.

Look at His response: *“Go and show John again...”*

The Lord is willing to help John as he works through his problem. Many would have reacted in anger; Jesus reacted in love.

Thought:

I wish we never doubted, but sometimes we do!

Have you ever found yourself in a place of discouragement and depression like Elijah?

Have you ever come to the place where you are depressed, defeated, discouraged and disillusioned?

We all have!

Not only did the Lord answer him but also:

B. The Lord Assured John (vs. 4-5)

Matthew 11:4-5

⁴ Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

⁵ The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

The Lord merely pointed John back to the Word of God! Jesus reported all the things He was doing and reminded him of the words of the other prophets.

Isaiah 35:3-6

³ Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. ⁴ Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

⁶ Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

Isaiah 61:1-2

¹ The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and

the opening of the prison to them that are bound;² To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

The Lord directed John to the Word of God.

Understand:

The Bible is the absolute cure for our doubts!

If we can but read the Word and take on faith that God will do everything He has promised, and that He will stand by His Word no matter what, we can see our doubts fall apart before our eyes.

Not only did the Lord answer and assure him but also:

C. The Lord Admonished Him (vs. 6)

Matthew 11:6

⁶ And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

This is the same admonition Jesus gave to Thomas when he questioned the resurrection.

The Lord wants John to know that he does not have to have all the answers.

He wants John's faith to be in Jesus in spite of what the eyes see, the heart feels, or the mind thinks.

He wants John to believe in Him and to simply trust Him by faith.

We have considered the Doubt of John and the Disclosure of the Lord and finally we consider:

3. THE DECLARATION TO THE WORLD (VS. 11)

Matthew 11:11

¹¹ Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

This was the declaration to the world by the Lord Himself.

This refers to the greatness of his character and of his privileges.

He was a true man of God; the last of the Old Testament prophets; and the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He was somebody real special.

Close:

John was a man that at times was bold and at times doubted.

John demonstrated the same things that you and I deal with.

At times we may be bold and there are times that we are not so bold.

But we still can stand fast in the Lord as did John and was verified by the Lord.

Matthew 11:11

¹¹ *Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women **there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist:** notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*

You may be discouraged today, bring that to the Lord.

You may have doubts today, bring that to the Lord.

The Lord and His Word has the answers you need.