

## **Matthew 11:1-19, Luke 7:18-25 – John the Baptist & Doubt**

### **Introduction**

1. Our text deals with the identity of Jesus, similar to **Mat 16:13-17**
2. Reactions to Jesus were different (awe, wonder, scandalized)
3. John the Baptist poses the question as to whether Jesus is the Messiah; The reaction of John to Jesus while imprisoned, was doubt

**The Main Idea: Every Christian doubts. But honest doubting is not the absence of faith. It is a stark contrast from a critical spirit or indifference and apathy. What the child of God must do when he or she doubts is go to the source of faith; go to Christ and His Word.**

### **The Baptist's Honest Doubt (Matthew 11:1-3, Luke 7:18-19)**

1. Jesus is continuing his ministry and the report of His works reach John's ears through his disciples
2. Who is John the Baptist?
  - a. He was the greatest prophet and the forerunner of Jesus Christ
  - b. He was unique: wore animal skins, ate locusts and honey
  - c. He was imprisoned for his faithfulness to God
    - i. He called out Herod Antipas for his wickedness publicly
3. Doubt was sown and grew in the heart of John the Baptist and he sent his disciples to question Jesus about the Lord's identity
  - a. Am I mistaken? Was I wrong about the things I concluded?
  - b. The holy prophet of God experienced doubt – He was a sinner who needed the Lord just as any of us do
4. Never confuse doubt with disbelief, for they are not the same
  - a. Disbelief is the act of the will that refuses to trust & obey Christ
  - b. Honest doubt is voicing uncertainties, grounded in faith in Jesus and can be a catalyst for growth in the Christian life
5. Why does John the Baptist doubt who Jesus is? There may be layers to this question
  - a. Cannot explain his doubt that there was no knowledge or evidence of Jesus as the Messiah
    - i. His family connection (heritage and history)
    - ii. His spiritual confirmation
  - b. Doubt arises when extraordinary events occur (imprisonment)
  - c. Doubt arises when expectations are not met (ministry ended)
  - d. Doubt arises when there is an inability to see the whole picture (they Jewish perspective was that the Messiah would be a conquering King subjugating the nations)
  - e. Doubt arises when there is physical and emotional weariness
6. John, in His doubt, goes to the source where faith is found; He sets his gaze upon Christ and His Word
7. Anyone who goes to the Lord with sincere, honest questions will have those questions answered from God's revelation – His Word

## **How Jesus Responds to Honest Doubters (Matt 11:3-6, Luke 7:20-23)**

1. Set your gaze on what God is doing and meditate on the faithfulness of God who keeps His Word and His promises
2. Remember the Scriptures! God fulfills what was prophesied in the Old Testament (**Is 26:19; 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 42:6-7, 18; 61:1**)
3. When you doubt, go to the Lord for answers in His Word
4. Faith is fed and strengthened by bathing the mind in the Word; the opposite effect happens to doubt: it becomes weakened/cured

## **The Critical Spirit (Matthew 11:16-19, Luke 7:28-35)**

1. Doubting can be dangerous for it is a lack of faith, and faith pleases God, so we should fight through doubt
2. Remaining in doubt can lead to a critical spirit
3. There were those who went beyond doubting and rejected Jesus and were filled with a critical spirit
4. Jesus pointed out John the Baptist who was the greatest prophet, and some believed and others were filled with a critical spirit
5. Jesus is a stumbling block to those who doubt and foolishness to the critical spirit; nothing pleases the one with a critical spirit
  - a. Jesus compares the critical spirit to children who cannot convince other children to play – they tried a wedding game and a funeral game and the other children would not play
  - b. John took a Nazarite vow and abstained from food and drink and Jesus partook of food and drink
  - c. Those with a critical spirit mocked both (demonic, drunkard)
6. A Spirit of criticism is different from constructive, wise critique
7. The critical spirit is never pleased, satisfied, not matter what; They say, "I shall not be moved!"
8. Those who are critical in spirit shrink into something ugly; are negative and sour with everything/everyone except themselves

## **Wisdom is Justified in the Fruit Produced (Mat 11:19b, Luke 7:35)**

1. The wise and those who are of kindred spirit with the wise recognize the way John and Jesus lived as correct
2. The wise see John's and Jesus' preaching and practices in line with God; Jesus proved to be the Messiah and John showed he was His forerunner preparing the way
3. The foolish skeptic, critical in spirit, mock and reject it
4. The teaching and works justified who they were; they came from God – the critical spirit will always find fault no matter what

## **Conclusion**

1. Honest doubt is not a mark of disbelief! But it is not safe to remain in doubt – Go to the Lord when you doubt to build faith
2. This world is marked by a critical spirit; it is harsh, unloving, and unmerciful