



Are You the One? How Jesus Responds to Doubt and Suffering

Matthew 11:2-11

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: 5 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. 6 And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. 9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is he of whom it is written, ‘” Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’

11 Truly, say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Few scenes in the Gospels are as unexpected and as comforting as the moment recorded in Matthew 11. John the Baptist, the fearless forerunner of Christ, now sits in a prison cell. The voice that once thundered in the wilderness has grown quiet, and from that place of confinement John sends a question to Jesus.

Matthew 11:3 (ESV)

“Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”

This is not the question of an unbeliever searching for proof. It is the question of a faithful servant wrestling with suffering. Scripture does not hide this moment. Instead, it places it before us to show us both the honesty of faith under pressure and the gentleness of Christ toward His people.

A Faith Tested by Suffering

John’s circumstances matter. He is imprisoned by Herod for faithfully speaking the truth. The Messiah has come, yet John remains in chains. The kingdom John proclaimed does not look the way he expected it to look.

Suffering has a way of pressing hard questions back to the surface.

If Christ reigns, why does injustice persist?

If the kingdom has come, why does obedience lead to hardship?

John had already testified that Jesus was the Lamb of God. He had seen the Spirit descend and heard the voice from heaven. Yet now, confined and waiting, he asks Jesus directly if He truly is the promised One.

This passage reminds us that doubt is not always rebellion. Often it is the cry of faith under strain.

Jesus Answers with Scripture and Fulfillment

Jesus does not rebuke John. He does not shame him for asking. Instead, He answers with truth grounded in Scripture.

Matthew 11:4–5 (ESV)

“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.”

Every part of Jesus’ response echoes the promises of Isaiah concerning the coming Messiah. Jesus points John away from his circumstances and back to the Word of God. The works of Christ testify that the promises of God are being fulfilled.

Jesus then adds a gentle word of exhortation.

Matthew 11:6 (ESV)

“And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

The kingdom had come, but not in the way many expected. Christ did not come first with immediate judgment, but with mercy, healing, and proclamation. Blessed is the one who trusts Christ even when His ways challenge our expectations.

Jesus Honors John the Baptist

As John's disciples depart, Jesus turns to the crowd and publicly honors His servant.

Matthew 11:9 (ESV)

"What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet."

John is not a weak reed shaken by the wind, nor a man seeking comfort and approval. He is the promised messenger who prepared the way for the Lord.

Jesus then makes a remarkable declaration.

Matthew 11:11a (ESV)

"Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist."

John's moment of doubt does not erase a lifetime of faithful obedience. Christ Himself bears witness to John's greatness.

Kingdom Privilege Under the New Covenant

Jesus immediately follows His commendation of John with a statement meant to magnify grace, not diminish John.

Matthew 11:11b (ESV)

"Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

John stands at the end of the Old Covenant era. He announced the Messiah but did not live to see the cross, resurrection, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Those who belong to Christ today live on the finished side of redemption.

Even the least believer now enjoys privileges that John himself longed to see. We rest not in promises awaiting fulfillment, but in a salvation fully accomplished by Christ.

Gospel Encouragement for the Church Today

This passage offers rich encouragement for the church.

Christ welcomes honest questions brought to Him in faith.

Assurance is grounded not in feelings, but in Scripture and the finished work of Christ.

Jesus is not ashamed of His servants in their weakness.

Life in the kingdom is a gift of immeasurable grace.

Whether the preaching of Christ is rejected as foolishness or received as the power of God, our Lord remains faithful to His people and glorified in His purposes.

Trusting Christ When Faith Is Tested

John's question did not signal the end of his faith, but a moment of refinement. Christ met him with truth, affirmed his calling, and upheld his testimony.

The same Savior meets His people today. He reigns. His Word is sure. His kingdom is unshakable.

Matthew 11:6 (ESV)

“Blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

To God alone be the glory.

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