

When Doubts Arise

The greatest of the Lord's servants are attacked with times of doubt. Even John the Baptist was not immune. He had stood mightily for God (Luke 3:1-18). As a result, Herod had thrown him into jail (Luke 3:19-20). As John sat in prison, he began to doubt. Evidently, he expected the Messiah to set up His kingdom immediately. He did not understand that Jesus must first die for sins, thus setting up His kingdom. In Luke 7:19-30, there are three items concerning John that are worthy of consideration for the doubting Christian.

First, he was a concerned prophet (vv. 19-20). John sends representatives to ask Jesus, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" The Bible never represents the righteous as free from imperfection. Although there are other examples of God's servants who doubted, the most instructive parallel is Peter. He witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus, beheld the glory of God, and heard the voice of the Father; yet he sank far below John the Baptist and denied his Lord with cursing (Matthew 26:69-75).

Second, he was a challenged prophet (vv. 21-23). Jesus first worked miracles before the eyes of John's disciples: "And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight." He showed that He was Messiah by His deeds. This would have testified to John more potently than mere words of assertion. Jesus never worked miracles to gratify skeptical curiosity, but He did use them to strengthen wavering faith. But He also sent a message to John encouraging Him to continue believing. Jesus sought to prevent John from a similar fate of the unbelieving scribes. He said, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

Third, he was a commended prophet (vv. 24-30). The crowd is made to understand what a great man of God John really was! The text says, "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John" (v. 29). At that moment John, in prison, may have felt like a complete failure. His expectations were not fulfilled. The unfruitful trees had not been cut down and the chaff had not been burned (cp. Matthew 3:10-12). Instead, John, through his obedience to God, was a successful part in the Lord's work. Many people will be surprised what great successes they were when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

John 16:33 says, "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." In Deuteronomy 4:30-31, God promised not to forsake nor forget His people when they were in tribulation. Everyone needs encouragement every once in a while. Inspiration did not equal omniscience. John had doubts and needed to be reassured of Jesus Christ. When doubts arise, take solace in God's word.

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