

“How Can We Be Sure?”

Sermon Submission Info: whitesrun / easterday

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Full Title: How Can We Be Sure?

SubTitle/Series/Album: Luke

Short-Version Title: How Can We Be Sure?

Date Preached: 05/06/2012

Event Category: Sunday Service

Bible Reference: Luke 7:18-23

File: Luke 7 How Can We Be Sure.pages

Brief Overview:

I) Introduction - How Can We Be Sure?

- A) John had doubts
- B) Perhaps wondering why Jesus had not sprung him - set the captives free Luke 4:18
- C) Perhaps being fed propaganda - but disciples could visit
- D) Perhaps did this for his disciples
- E) Perhaps just despairing doubt
- F) Perhaps heard of leadership opposition

II) Doubt is not unusual

- A) Other examples:
 - 1) Moses ready to quit once
 - 2) Elijah doubted and wanted to quit
 - 3) Jeremiah
 - 4) Paul 2 Cor. 1:8-9, “ we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death.”
- B) Thomas doubted - and Jesus did not rebuke him harshly - showed him what he needed to see and encouraged him to believe.

III) Doubt is not unbelief

- A) Doubt - a matter of the mind
- B) Unbelief - a matter of the will

- C) Oswald chambers, “Doubt is not always a sign that a man is wrong, it may be a sign that he is thinking.”
- D) JTB - not of the will, but physical and emotional stress
- E) John’s situation - so we may sympathize
 - 1) John preached judgment, repentance, the kingdom of God at hand
 - 2) Jesus did acts of lovingkindness
 - 3) Jesus made no move to take over
 - 4) Jesus was offending the leadership
 - 5) Jesus made no move to free JTB!
 - (a) Herod - this isn’t the Baptist you’re looking for
 - 6) Jesus was dining with and accepting sinners
- F) His situation - circumstances were not lining up according to his expectations -
 - 1) Consider:
 - (a) a life dedicated from the womb for God, nazirite vow, never drank, preached unpopular messages,
 - (b) covenant with Israel - blessings and curses - he had done everything right, sure God would bless it
 - 2) Confusion about God’s plan
 - 3) Concern over his place in it
- G) Reasonable thinking - perhaps a little lack of faith, but how better to increase our faith than to hear from Christ himself.
- H) So doubt is not unbelief

IV) The Cure for Doubt

- A) Confirmation through God’s word
- B) Confirmation through a Word from Jesus

V) God’s Word

- A) This is an enormously important matter
- B) The scriptures exist for a reason - to bear witness of the truth - to prove God! Not by argument, but by content.
- C) The question - 19, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”
 - 1) Reveals the nature of the problem - confusion about the plan and his place in it.
 - 2) Not - is there really a God? Will he send a Messiah?

- 3) A straight-forward question essentially asking “Are you the Messiah?”

D) Jesus’ answer:

- 1) Actions - it appears he did these things in the presence of these men - v21, “at that time”
 - 2) Words -
 - (a) Tell him what you have seen and heard
 - (b) The blind receive their sight,
 - (c) the lame walk
 - (d) lepers are cleansed
 - (e) deaf hear
 - (f) dead are raised up
 - (g) the poor have good news preached to them
 - (h) Blessed is the one who is not offended by me.
 - 3) Everyone a scripture prophecy about the acts of Messiah!
 - 4) What gets my attention - first and last
 - 5) The blind receive their sight: blindness was never cured in the Old Testament, yet this prediction of the Messianic mission is repeated several times throughout the prophets
 - 6) Blessed is the one who is not offended by me.
 - (a) Isa. 8:14-15, “And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.”
 - (b) Quoted in Romans 9:32-33 explaining Israel’s unbelief
 - (c) I always understood Jesus’ answer as pointing to himself for proof - and he is
 - (d) But he also is pointing out that the rejection he is experiencing is also proof - many are stumbling over him!
 - (e) The world’s reaction to Jesus is as much confirmation as the truth of scripture as Jesus’ works themselves
- E) The scriptures were made for this purpose - to form and strengthen faith!
- 1) John 20:31,

- 2) Jesus says elsewhere that this is all about Him
 - (a) Luke 24:27, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”
 - (b) Matt 5:17, He did not come to abolish, but to fulfill
 - (c) All of scripture speaks of Jesus
- F) The scriptures prove the Christ
 - 1) through fulfilled prophecies - over 300, 1st visit
 - 2) through fulfilled types / antitypes
 - 3) through fulfilled patterns
 - 4) through fulfilled covenants, promises of God, etc.
 - 5) Far too complex to have been contrived
 - 6) Far too complex or perfect to be coincidence
 - 7) Internal proof: codes, patterns, prophecies, truth, relevance
 - 8) External proof: application, archaeology, science, etc.

VI) **A Word from Jesus**

- A) John reaches out to Jesus personally - Jesus sends encouraging reply - the faces of John's disciples!
- B) God will answer
 - 1) Through His Word
 - 2) Through His actions
 - 3) Through other believers
- C) Draw close to Jesus when doubting
 - 1) What if John had never asked!
 - 2) Many make the opposite move when doubting, and it rarely ends well.