

“DO WE LOOK FOR ANOTHER?”

August 27, 2017

Matthew 11:1-6

King Herod’s gloomy prison became home to John the Baptist. There he languished, doubtless amid the most vile and violent of men. He was an outdoorsman, loving liberty, the wide, open wilderness; living off the bounty of nature. Deprived of that liberty, he suffered loneliness, boredom, deprivation, the harsh austerities of an ancient prison, without any rights or due process, where the king could behead a prisoner on a whim. He was imprisoned for speaking truth.

From that gloom and loneliness he sent two of his disciples to inquire of Jesus, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” Was John doubting amid his horrible circumstances? Or was he sending his disciples who were doubting (Matt. 9:14, John 3:25ff), so that they might see and hear for themselves who Jesus was? Or, was he wanting his name brought unto Jesus, hoping to receive from Him a word to dispel his suffering, as he willingly decreased in order that Jesus might increase (John 3:30)? John’s motivation is not clearly stated in Scripture. But Christ’s response answers any of these suggested reasons, and answers for all humanity the question John asked through his disciples.

Christ’s response demonstrated:

1. Why men should believe in Him
2. His own infinite goodness
3. That He is more than mere man, possessing powers that are exclusively God’s
4. Fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets who foretold Messiah’s coming

“Then shall the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 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 35:3-6). (See also Isaiah 29:17, 18; 42:7, 16, 18; 61:1-3).

5. That He is the answer to every distress

In the six-fold sequence of good that Christ named, it is to be noted that each focused upon the weakest among men; those consigned to begging, the lowest social standing. Thus, Christ affirmed that “the poor have the gospel preached unto them.” “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (I Corinthians 1:26, 27).

Also notable is a progression in power required by this sequence: raising the dead is more notable than healing. Following this pattern, gospel preaching is placed highest. In fact, this is the reason Christ came to earth, “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1).

Similarly, this is a listing of incontrovertible miracles, concluding with “the poor have the gospel preached unto them.” The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). Thereby, the dead soul is raised unto eternal life. This is the crowning miracle of Christ’s ministry.