

John the Baptist was in prison having challenged the immorality of Herod Antipas, the curious and pathetic governor of Galilee and Perea (Mark 6:17-20). John was held captive in Herod's mountain fortress at Machareus. In Matthew 11, John spoke from prison.

11:1-3 *When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah and sent his disciples to ask: "Are you the One who was to come? Or should we look for someone else?"*

An astonishing question. Is John now doubting Jesus? What lies behind his question? Previously, John proclaimed Jesus' coming (Matthew 3:8-12). John baptized Jesus. Two years later John is asking: Are you the One? There are many world religions. The Bible is clear: Jesus is not one choice among many equal spiritual options nor is Jesus merely the best choice of many religious choices. Do you ever ask of Jesus: 'Are you the One?' 'Jesus, if you are God, why don't you stop all wars?' 'I'm unemployed. Sick. Jesus, are you really with me?' **If God does not meet our expectations, we quickly question him.**

11:4-5 *Jesus directs John to the Bible— to Isaiah 35 – showing how Jesus is the One!*

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor

Jesus' partial quoting of Isaiah explains John's question. Isaiah 35 begins: "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance with divine retribution he will come to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer and the mute tongue shout for joy." (Isaiah 61:1 promises release for prisoners). John preached that Jesus will deal with all his enemies: "burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Why hasn't John been rescued? Why has Herod not yet punished? **"Jesus, if you're really the One, why am I in prison?"** John must learn that God never sacrifices an ultimate reality for an immediate relief.

We live between the **NOW and the NOT YET. Faith does work and faith must wait.**

There has been judgment, on the cross. There will be final judgment, on the Last Day.

Wrong expectations of the kingdom of Jesus result in people becoming disappointed

11:6: 'Blessed is the man who does not fall away because of me.' Belonging to God's kingdom involves suffering and patience: 'I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus.' (Revelation 1:10)

11:7-15 Jesus speaks about John and by doing so identifies himself as truly the One.

John, a reed swayed? Weak and pliable. Wearing fine clothes. Fitting in with society? No. The prophet John, the greatest man born among women, prepared us for Jesus. And we, the least in the kingdom, have the greater privilege of proclaiming only Jesus.

The Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing. For every African born, two become Christians. **And forceful men lay hold of it.** People try to stop God's kingdom by silencing God's people, as Herod did. But Jesus is the one and only Lord and Savior.

Take all your questions to Jesus. Live as God's people in the NOW- NOT YET kingdom.

Don't hide behind the parapet of popular opinion. Practice the patience of faith.

Proclaim his uniqueness. Jesus is not the answerer. He is the Answer.