

LUKE I A Prophet in Prison

Text: Luke 7:18–30

—Bill Turner

Even a Dungeon Prison Cannot Extinguish Hope

Introduction:

1. **When Life Get's Hard — We Wrestle with the hard questions**
 - a. When Life Get's Difficult—we even wrestle with the Difficulties of Doubt
 2. **John is a prophet of God who was sent in the spirit and power of Elijah**
 - a. But John sends two of his disciples to Jesus to ask if Jesus is the One: the Messiah
 3. **We're tempted to defend John to say John never experienced questions or doubt**
 - a. But is it realistic to say a Prophet Never has questions or doubts?
 4. **Not only is John a Prophet—He is also a Human Being.**
 - a. Moses was a Prophet—Did Moses ever wrestle with fear or doubts? YES
 - b. Elijah was a Prophet — Did Elijah ever wrestle with fear or doubts? YES
 5. **We're Human too and Often Our Doubt is Not with God—But We Doubt Ourselves**
-

I. A PERPLEXING QUESTION (v.17–20)

A. A POWERFUL PROPHET IS IN PRISON

1. **John's Ministry Was Difficult and He Did Not Live a Pampered Life**
 - a) He Lived in the Deserted Wilderness of Judea
 - b) He Wore Camel Skin Garments
 - c) He Ate Locusts and Wild Honey for Food
2. **John was a fiery prophet sent to Break the Hard Ground of Rocky Hearts...
in order to prepare the Way for Jesus.**
 - a) He Rejected the corrupt religious rulers
 - b) He Rejected the Praise of Men
 - c) He Rejected the Comfortable Living of the Elites
 - d) He Preached a Message of Repentance because the Messiah was coming
 - e) He Baptized the Humble Who Repented in the Jordon River
3. **But He Also Made Enemies in High Places By Preaching the Truth**
 - a) John Called Out the Immorality of Herod who took his brothers wife Herodias
 - b) Now She Will Not Rest Until John is Dead
 - c) John Has Been Set-up... He is in Prison...
 - d) and Herodious Will Make Sure to Have His Head Delivered on a Platter.

[It is Believed John was Held in Herod's Dungeon Prison—MAP/IMAGE]

**Jewish Historian Josephus records that John was imprisoned and beheaded at this
castle-fortress of Machaerus on the eastern shore of Dead Sea.**

Built by Herod to be his winter palace. (R.C. Foster, Life of Christ p.517)

Was This God's Plan? —For John To Be Set Up By an Evil Woman?

— Was this the Way His Ministry Was Supposed to End?

I Think We Would Have Some Questions as well

B. JOHN HAS A QUESTION (v.18-20)

Why is John asking this? –Is He Having Doubts? Is He Discouraged?

Here are some different interpretations:

1. JOHN WRESTLED WITH DOUBT AND WANTS TO BE SURE...

a) John is Isolated in Herod's Prison...

- (1) He is Only Able to Get News in bits and pieces... Fragments of Jesus Ministry
- (2) And Maybe the Reports Are Not Enough—He Wants to Know For Sure!

b) ALSO: John was Openly & Defiantly—Announcing the Arrival of the Messiah

- (1) But Jesus is Not So Open as John in Declaring He is the Messiah...
- (2) He is even telling some not to tell what He has done

2. JOHN HAD DOUBTS, NOT ABOUT JESUS, BUT DOUBTS ABOUT HIMSELF

- a) I may not get out of prison... did I finish the work God gave me to do?
- b) Did I Do Enough? Am I Supposed to be in Prison? CAN I DO MORE?
- c) Maybe Wanting Reassurance from Jesus Himself?
- d) So Maybe It's NOT DOUBT—BUT DISAPPOINTMENT > That he cannot do more!

3. JOHN IS PROMPTING JESUS... Thinking it was time for decisive action.

- a) Is John asking for Jesus to Intervene so John can continue His Mission?
What are You Waiting For? Why Aren't You Doing More?
- b) Or is John asking for Jesus to Begin enacting His Divine Authority on Earth?
Why are you letting Herod Do This? Why Let Him Stay in Power?

4. JOHN IS POINTING HIS DISCIPLES TO JESUS...

- a) That John is Not having Doubts — but maybe some of his disciples are...
- b) But He is Sending His Disciples to See Jesus For Themselves
- c) So They Can Realize Why Jesus must increase but John must Decrease
- d) To Be Able to Handle the Hard Truth that John Will Not Make It Out of Prison—
But Jesus Mission as the Messiah Must Continue

C. POINT—EVEN A DUNGEON PRISON CANNOT EXTINGUISH HIS HOPE

1. It was only a matter of Time before John was going to be Martyred

- a) His Head would be served on platter to the sick Woman who arranged his execution
- b) But John's Hope Was Not in Herod's or Caesars or Pharisees or Praise of Men...
- c) His Hope Was Not Even IN HIMSELF! —> His Hope is in Christ

2. So What Did John Do? He Took His Questions & Doubts to Jesus

- a) He Went to Jesus For the Answer
- b) He Went to Jesus Who IS the Answer!
- c) Even Prison and Death Could not Extinguish His Hope in Christ

3. When Life is Hard—When We Face the Shadow of the Grave

We All Wrestle with Questions, Disappointments & Doubts

- a) That's When We Need to Do What John Did...
- b) To Have the Faith to Go to the Lord for Answers
- c) And Put Our Hope in Him, — Not in Ourselves

II. AN ASTOUNDING ANSWER (v.20–23)

A. JESUS' ANSWER—RATHER THAN TELLING THEM HE SHOWS THEM

“And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight.” (7:21)

1. They Are Seeing the Power of Jesus with their Own Eyes!

a) But it is Jesus Power Performed in a Personal and Even Humble Way!

2. Most of these miracles fulfill the promises given in Isaiah:

- The blind see (Isaiah 61:1, 35:5).
- The lame walk (Isaiah 35:6).
- The deaf hear (Isaiah 35:5).
- The dead live (Isaiah 26:19).
- The poor hear the good news (Isaiah 61:1).

3. John Was a Great Prophet — But He Did Not Preform Miracles...

Only the Messiah Could Do What Jesus was doing!

B. BUT NOTICE WHAT HIS ANSWER WAS NOT...

1. Jesus DID NOT SAY:

a) Tell John ‘My armies are massing. The Roman headquarters of Caesarea, is about to fall. The sinners are being obliterated. Judgment has begun.’ (Barclay)

2. Jesus Showed His Messianic Power to Answer their their Question...

- a) But His Power was Performed in a Personal and Even Humble Way!
- b) His Power was seen in Humble Acts of Service...
- c) Not in Spectacular Displays of Judgement and Political Power

3. Then Jesus Gives a Blessing:

‘And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.’

- a) Why Would a Person Be Offended by Jesus?
- b) Because Israel Had Many Expectations of the Messiah...
- c) Some of them SELFISH Expectations
- d) But Jesus Did Not Meet Everyones Expectations.
- e) Especially Those of the Scribes and Pharisees... and Rulers of the Jews

III. AN ASTONISHING TRUTH (v.24–28)

A. JESUS COMMENDS JOHN... (v.24-27)

1. What did you go out to see? What Did You Want to See?

A Celebrity? ... a Politician? Health & Wealth Preacher? A Popularity Seeker? People Pleaser?

“Jesus strikes out at two of the most deadly weaknesses of preachers—the popularity craze and the lust for riches and luxury.” (R.C. Foster)

2. John Was Not a Reed — Swaying in the Wind of Popular Opinions...

- a) A Reed is not strong enough to withstand the elements—
—it yields to every wind that blows...
- b) A Lot of People Sway in Whatever Way the Wind of Popular Opinion is Blowing
- c) To Be Approved By the Powers that Be or Accepted by the Woke Mob of the day

3. John Was Not a Celebrity—who lived in Luxury...

- a) John was Not a Politician—in Soft Clothing...
- b) John was not a people-pleasing preacher...
- c) John Was Just the Opposite!

4. John Was a Prophet Preaching Truth—and it Cost Him His Life!

Jesus is Defending John! But He Also Points Out the Limitation of John

B. JESUS GIVES AN ASTONISHING TRUTH... (v.27-28)

- 1. There was no greater prophet born of woman than John...**
- 2. But As Great a Prophet as John Was—**
- 3. the Least in the Kingdom is greater than he!**

C. HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

- 1. John was the last prophet of the Old Covenant system...**
 - a) He lived and died under the OT Law of Sin and Death—If You Sin You Die
 - b) The Law that CONVICTED You — but it COULD NOT SAVE You
- 2. John died before Jesus shed His blood to atone for the sins of the world**
 - a) John was not born again of the water and spirit like we can be in Christ
 - b) John did not have the Robe of Righteousness Made white by the blood of the lamb that is only provided in Christ...
 - c) Those who were baptized by John were then later baptized INTO CHRIST so they could receive FORGIVENESS and the gift of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**)

3. The Law of the Spirit of Life Has Set Us Free From the Law of Sin & Death

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2 ESV)

- 4. Because of What Jesus Did For Us at the Cross—Even the Least in the Kingdom are seated with Christ in the Heavenly Places (**Eph. 2:4–6**)**
- 5. We Have Access to the Grace purchased at the cross that John Didn't Have**
¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way (Heb. 10:19)

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Jesus did not Prevent John from Giving the Full Measure of Devotion**
John Was Faithful Unto Death—Even a Dungeon Prison Cannot Extinguish Hope
- 2. Even after John Had Died, Jesus Told the Disciples (**Luke 10:23–24**)**
- 3. Jesus Showed them the Evidence of Who He Is (**Luke 7:22–23**)**