

Dealing with Doubt  
Matthew 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23

### Introduction

What should be the Christian's response to doubt - both their own or that of another Christian? Within some circles of Christianity, doubt is quickly condemned with particular verses then cited as proof. For example, they read James 1:6, "*But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind,*" and conclude that all doubt is bad. Or they may go to passages such as Matthew 14:31 or Luke 24:38 in which Jesus questions why people are doubting. Then there is the tie they make between doubt, lack of faith and sin in Romans 14:23 - "*But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.*"

However, such condemnation for doubt does not look at the context of the verses cited; it ignores Jude 22 which states we are to "*have mercy on some, who are doubting,*" and more importantly, it does not follow Jesus' example. This morning we will be examining Luke 7:18-23 in which Jesus responds to the doubt of a great man. In this passage we will learn some of the causes of doubt as well as how to properly deal with it.

While doubt can show a lack of faith, which in particular situations could even be sinful, for the most part, doubt is simply the expression of uncertainty. There is a lack of confidence which hinders a conclusion or taking action. In the real world, having no doubts is a demonstration that something is wrong, not that something is right. An old French Proverb says, "*He who knows nothing doubts nothing.*" G.K. Chesterton said something similar, "*materialists and madmen never have doubts.*" The problem with doubting is not in having the doubt itself, but in what is done with that doubt. If doubt is dealt with properly, then there can be a positive outcome such as Alfred Tennyson described in these lines,

*...one indeed I knew*

*In many a subtle question versed,  
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,*

*But ever strove to make it true:*

*Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,  
At last he beat his music out;  
There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.*

*He fought his doubts, and gathered strength;  
He would not make his judgment blind;  
He faced the specters of the mind,  
And laid them, thus he came at length*

*To find a stronger faith his own;  
And Power was with him in the night,  
Which makes the darkness and the light,  
And dwells not in the light alone.*

If doubt is faced honestly and handled properly, then it can result in a stronger faith. When you doubt, you need to ask the questions, and those who seek to help you with your doubt need to point you to truth and give you honest answers. Turn to Matthew 11:2 and put a bookmark there, then turn to Luke 7:18.

**The Setting** - Luke 7:18-20; Matthew 11:2-3

Luke 7:18 states, *“And the disciples of John reported to him about all these things.”* What things? Jesus had been traveling through the region of Galilee teaching, preaching, healing and casting out demons. He had taught those following Him the nature of true righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus had returned to Capernaum where He healed the centurion’s servant from a distance by simply commanding it (Luke 7:1-10). Jesus had then traveled to Nain with his disciples and with a large multitude following him. As He was coming into that city He stopped a funeral procession and raised up the widow’s son from the dead (Luke 7:11-17). Those are the things that were being reported to John.

Matthew 11:2 tells where John was at the time when these things were reported to him by his disciples. What John was experiencing at the time plays a role in his response. Matthew 11:2, *“Now when John in prison heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples.”* John was in prison. This man who from birth was used to the open spaces of the desert is now confined. According to Josephus, John’s imprisonment was at Herod’s fortress at Machaerus located about five miles east and fifteen miles south of the northern tip of the Dead Sea. Mark 6:17-20 explains the reason for his imprisonment, *“For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not do so; for Herod was afraid of John knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.”*

John was in prison because he had confronted Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch (puppet king) over Judea, about the sinful relationship he had with his sister-in-law. Herod had taken a trip to Rome in which his brother Philip’s wife, Herodias, had accompanied him. During that trip Herod and Herodias decided they would rather have each other than their current spouses, so they divorced them and married each other. From the text we have read and from what follows it we come to understand that Herodias is wicked to the core and the one responsible for John’s imprisonment and his eventual death. Herod, though certainly wicked, still has some respect for righteous men. We find him perplexed because he cannot find a reconciliation between his wickedness and what John is telling him. Like many people, he wanted to enjoy his sin and also be right with God as John was telling him, but sin and righteousness are mutually exclusive. It is either one or the other. In the end, Herod choose evil. There are certainly many around today that are just like Herod or Herodias. Some are evil, but curious and perplexed by righteousness, while others are just evil and openly fighting against righteousness.

John is in prison because of his righteousness and for calling others to repentance. Remember, his message from the beginning of his ministry has been, *“repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* Now John is in prison and Jesus and His disciples are out teaching and preaching that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. John was the one that was the voice crying in the wilderness to make ready for the coming of the Messiah. It was John that preached that the Messiah would *“baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire,”* and who had *“his winnowing fork in His hand”* to *“thoroughly clear His threshing floor”* and *“gather His wheat into his barns, but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”* (Matthew 3:11-12). It was John that proclaimed that Jesus was the *“Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29) and *“the Son of God”* (John 1:34). It was John that had baptized Jesus at Jesus’ insistence and was witness to the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Jesus and proclaiming, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Matt. 3:17). John knew and had

taught that Jesus would increase and that he would decrease, but where did his being in prison for so long fit - and it may have been up to a year - if the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

There was confusion on the part of John and he began to have doubts. But in having his doubts, John demonstrates to us what to do with them. John did not start asking other people what they thought of Jesus. He did not start polling the religious experts of the time to see what they were thinking. He did not keep mulling it over himself. Instead, he did what needs to be done whenever doubts arise. He sought out the source that could answer his questions. John could not go himself since he was in prison. Luke 7:19-20 records what he did. <sup>19</sup> *Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?"* <sup>20</sup> *When the men came to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'"*

John's question showed the depth of what he was struggling with. The term, "*the Expected One*" is a reference to the Messiah. This title for the Messiah is found in the Psalm 40:7 and Psalm 118:26 as well as used or insinuated to by every Gospel writer (see: Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:7; 11:9; Luke 3:16; 13:35; 19:38; John 1:27). To ask if Jesus was the Expected One was to ask Jesus if He was the Messiah. In effect, John is saying to Jesus, "I have been uncompromising in my belief that you are the Messiah; but have I been wrong?" This is a deep question, but, as we shall see later, Jesus does not rebuke him for it. But before we look at Jesus answer, I want us to consider four elements that may have contributed to John's doubts. These four elements are usually at the heart of our own doubts.

## **Four Causes of Doubt**

### **Trying Situations**

The first element is being in a trying situation, and John was certainly in a difficult circumstance. John was use to traveling freely in the vastness of the Judean wilderness, the open desert and the Jordan valley. He was a country boy who was now confined to a room, and possibly just a small cell in a dungeon. John had been use to talking with crowds of people and being used mightily of God to affect the whole nation, but now he is restrained to just talking with Herod occasionally when Herod was curious. John was certainly aware of Herodias' bitter hatred towards him and knew she wanted him dead, so that added mental and emotional pressure to his already difficult physical circumstances. One cause of John's doubt was certainly the situation he found himself in.

Trying situations are nothing new for those that follow after God. Throughout both the Old and New Testament we find story after story of the godly suffering through difficult circumstances. When we find ourselves going through hard things, it is easily for our minds to quickly turn to wondering why God is allowing it. Sometimes the doubts are even stronger when such conditions develop after we have been especially diligent in serving the Lord. We conclude that it is not fair. It would seem that the least God could do is keep adversity out of your life since you are doing so much to serve Him. Such is the natural selfishness of man. Questions arise as to the validity of professed beliefs. Without correction, Satan will magnify such doubts and use them to undermine our trust and confidence in God.

We are never more vulnerable to doubting God's goodness and care for us than when we are suffering some hardship, and such difficulties come as part of a wide variety of situations. John was suffering from physical imprisonment, but there are a lot more common tragedies in life such as: A financial crises - you lose your job and cannot find another; Someone sues you for whatever reasons, and we certainly live in a society that quickly files law suits over even silly things; A relationship turns sour with a friend, a relative, a child or your spouse; Perhaps your spouse even leaves you for someone else; An accident of some sort - auto, fire, personal injury - destroys the plans you have made and things precious to you; Death takes away someone you love, which is hard enough, but perhaps it also leaves you all alone; A debilitating disease or accident leaves you unable to do the things you once did.

There are many things that can be trying situations for difficult circumstances are part of life in this fallen world. That is why trials are described in James 1:2 as things we just run into as part of life. In our

self centeredness, we tend to look at everything from our own narrow point of view. Even among Christians it is common for the perspective to be negative because the situations are seen in terms of personal hardship that hinders or even prevents living a full life. Such are the seeds of doubt that can quickly grow. Yet, we find throughout the Scriptures that the troubles of life are to have a positive effect.

James 1:2-3 commands us, *“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith . . .”* stop there a moment and please note that this is a testing of your faith. The troubles of life cause us to question what is what is not true, and that tests our beliefs and our trust in God. Doubt can arise at this point, but if that doubt is dealt with properly then the rest of the passage is fulfilled - verse 3, *“knowing that the testing of our faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”* The trials of life work to make us mature in the Lord if we handle the doubts properly, and verse 5 tells us that. *“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”* That is exactly what we see John the Baptist doing.

John needs wisdom in order to deal with the trying situation that he is in and so he sends and asks Jesus for help in the matter. We must do the same when doubts arise within us.

### **Limited Knowledge**

A second reason for doubt is incomplete revelation. John had been proclaiming many things about the coming Messiah including the idea that Messiah would conquer and judge as I mentioned earlier. John was having a hard time reconciling that message with what was happening to him personally. If Messiah was coming to conquer and judge the wicked, and if Jesus is the Messiah, then why is John, the forerunner and servant of the Messiah, suffering so at the hands of the wicked? This did not make sense to John and seemed contradictory. He, like all the other godly men of his time, did not understand the first coming of the Messiah as the suffering servant. The Scriptures declared that message, but it was a message overshadowed by the other Scripture picturing Messiah as the conquering king. John had limited understanding and incomplete revelation.

In our time, we can easily find ourselves in the same situation as John. A large part of our doubt comes not so much from the difficult circumstances themselves, but in not understanding why we are going through them. Doubt arises with the questions of *“why is this happening?”* and *“How does this fit with what the Scriptures say?”* You can look at certain verses and they seem contradictory to the circumstances you are experiencing.

A major part of the problem for most professing Christians is their lack of knowledge and understanding of God's word. Too many times I have dealt with people who quote verses such as John 14:14, *“If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it,”* along with the last part of John 10:10, *“. . . I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly,”* and they are questioning why their life has troubles in it. Often selections from the Psalms are added like this from Psalm 37:4, *“Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart,”* and this from Psalm 91:10, *“No evil will befall you, Nor will any plague come near your tent.”* There was even a book published entitled, *“The Jesus Person Pocket Promise Book,”* which was especially bad for taking selected Scriptures out of context to present only good things happening to believers. Each of those Scriptures quoted has a wider context that must be understood in order to interpret them correctly. In addition, the rest of the Bible must also be examined including verses such as John 16:33, *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world,”* and 2 Timothy 3:12, *“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”*

Lack of knowledge and understanding of Scripture leads to doubt, but there is also the fact that God has simply not revealed many things to us. Job went through very difficult trials, yet he did not know any reason for his great losses and physical suffering until it was over. Knowing the Bible well can give you a general understanding of what God is doing and why, but it will be rare that you will know the specific

reasons for God allowing the trials you experience. Sometimes that can be figured out after the fact, but rarely while you are going through them. The secret things belong to the Lord (Deuteronomy 29:29) and we must learn to trust that the Lord is good even when we do not understand the reasons for the things we may suffer.

### **Worldly Influence**

A third cause of doubt is worldly influence. John was subject to that just as we are. It was not just that John did not have complete revelation, but what revelation he did have was influenced by the beliefs of those in the society around him. He was in part was looking for the Messiah to come as the conquering king because everyone else was expecting that. We are also influenced by the society around us.

Consider your view of the world. Americans have enjoyed both prosperity and freedom unknown throughout most of human history, yet because it is what we have always known, we often take those things for granted. This shows up in the kinds of things Americans consider to be difficult circumstances as demonstrated by their complaining about such things as: The air conditioner breaks in Summer; Having two cars and one of them breaks down; Going to the market and finding the sale item has been sold out; Having less stuff than other people; Having a “bad hair” day; A teen finds a big pimple in the middle of her forehead on the first day of school; Having feelings for someone which are not reciprocated; Waiting more than 30 minutes to see a doctor; Having to go on a diet to lose weight; etc. Your perspective of life will be skewed by the society in which you live. Modern Americans tend to expect life to be easy and so consider things to be difficult when they are actually very minor and especially so in comparison to what most of the world goes through daily.

A Christian’s view of God is affected by this as well. The health, wealth and prosperity gospel taught by so many of the TV preachers had permeated the idea of God as a benevolent grandfather throughout much of Christendom. Jesus is treated like a service product and marketed as the means to the good life - “*God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.*” No wonder doubt arises so quickly among so many who call themselves Christians when something occurs that does not match their idea of the good life.

Worldly influence diminishes along with its related doubts as your love for God and understanding of life from the Biblical perspective increases. John sought to overcome the influence of his society by seeking the truth from Jesus. We need to be careful to do the same.

### **Unfulfilled Expectations**

A fourth cause of doubt which is related to all of the above is unfulfilled expectations. Your expectations are built off of what you believe to be true. An incomplete knowledge of the Scriptures in conjunction with our understanding being swayed by the society around us gives us false expectations. The trials of life aggravate this.

One of the areas I cover during pre-marital counseling is expectations. Engaged couples tend live in a world of romance and wonderful dreams. They are going to get married and live happily ever after. That is my hope too, but I know it will not be true unless they learn to deal with real life. That begins by having them have honest talks about their expectations of each other and the future. A good marriage requires work to adjust to living with each other. I also alert them to the fact that life is full of pitfalls and they do not know and cannot control the future. All sorts of surprises happen in real life, good, bad and mixed. A job promotion requires a move to a distant city far from family, or employment could be lost. Accidents and disease cause physical disabilities. Fire, floods and wind destroy property. You gain unplanned children or there could be miscarriages and barrenness. Anything could happen. Wedding vows include for *better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, and in sickness and in health*, and life is always for better, for richer and in health. There is a lot of for worse, for poorer and in sickness.

The same thing happens in our relationship with God. When life and your expectations of God do not meet, you begin to wonder what happened. Did you miss something? Were you wrong to start with? What is the truth? Such was the case with John the Baptist. John was confused because his expectations were not being met and doubt had arisen. Similar things can happen to any of us, and when they do, then we need to follow John's example to deal with those doubts properly. John took those doubts to Jesus sending two of his disciples to Him to ask, "*Are you the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?*" Lets now look at Jesus' answer in Luke 7:21-23.

### **Jesus' Answer - Luke 7:21-23**

<sup>21</sup> *At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind.* <sup>22</sup> *And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.* <sup>23</sup> *"Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."*

Notice first that Jesus does not answer the question directly. Jesus does not say something simple like, "*Yes, I am the Messiah.*" Jesus also does not say anything that would give John any hope that he would be freed from his current difficult circumstances. Instead, Jesus first responds by taking action. Luke states that at that time, more literally translated as "*in that very hour,*" Jesus performed many miracles in the presence of John's disciples. Specifically, Jesus healed many people of different diseases, from things causing them to suffer, and from evil spirits. He also caused the blind to be able to see. Matthew's account does not mention this because he had just written about Jesus doing specific miracles of these types in chapters 8 & 9.

Jesus then tells John's two disciples to go back to John and tell him what they had seen and heard pointing out that they were in fulfillment of the prophecies in Isaiah 35:5-6 and 61:1 that the Messiah would do these very miracles. Jesus is giving John a special confirmation that He was indeed the Messiah because He was performing what was prophesied of the Messiah. John knew the Scriptures well enough to understand that truth even if he did not understand how everything fit together. John was not given a reason for his current suffering in jail. He was not given hope that he would be freed from his imprisonment. It would be enough for John to have it confirmed that Jesus was indeed the Expected One.

Jesus concludes with a mild admonition and encouragement that the person who does not stumble over Him would be blessed. Jesus does not give John any reproach for his question or doubt. There is no fluctuation in the Lord's love for this momentarily confused man, and in view of verses that follow in which Jesus praises John, it is certain that it was sufficient to strengthen John's faith.

That is the example we need to follow when we encounter people who have doubt. They do not need a rebuke, they need real answers to their questions and encouragement to go back to the Scriptures as the source of truth. Doubt arises from following the opinion and wisdom of men. Faith is built up by the Word of God.

### **Conclusions**

How is doubt overcome? First, honestly recognize that it is there and take it to the Lord. Ask Him for wisdom to deal with the doubt and its causes. Second, in the midst of the confusion, go back to the Scriptures to search out the truth. Begin with the basics of the things you know are true even if other things do not make sense at the moment.

One of the most helpful passages when in doubt is the sequence in Romans 5. Tribulations will come, but you can rejoice in the midst of them if you keep in mind the basic truth upon which our hope stands which is proclaimed in verse 8, "*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" You could be confused about many things, but when doubt arises

about God, go back to this truth that God has already proven His love for you for all time and eternity when Christ took your place and died for your sins even while you were still at enmity against Him. That truth forms the foundation to overcome any doubt regardless of its source. Your faith will be tested, but you have a hope which will enable you to persevere and develop an increasingly mature character that is stronger in faith and less wavering with any doubts.

When dealing with other people who have doubts, help them do the same things. Be honest and take the doubts to the Lord asking for His wisdom. Point them to the Scriptures to find the answers to their questions in its truth. Relay the foundational truths as needed so that they can build upon them to become strong in faith.

Sermon Notes: *Dealing with Doubt*  
Matthew 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23

**Introduction**

Some Christians \_\_\_\_\_doubt citing James 1:6; Matthew 14:31, Luke 24:38; Romans 14:23, etc.  
Jesus does not condemn the doubting and Jude 22 tells us to *have \_\_\_\_\_ on some, who are doubting*  
Doubt is usually the expression of \_\_\_\_\_ - which should be faced honestly and handled properly

**The Setting** - Luke 7:18-20; Matthew 11:2-3

Jesus had been preaching and performing \_\_\_\_\_ in Galilee - healing, casting our demons, raising the dead  
Matthew 11:2 - John was \_\_\_\_\_ at Herod's fortress in Machaerus  
Mark 6:17-20 - John had \_\_\_\_\_ Herod Antipas for his immoral relationship with Herodias  
John was the \_\_\_\_\_ of Messiah calling for people to repent in preparation for Messiah's arrival  
John was confused and doubting because being in \_\_\_\_\_ did not match proclaiming Messiah's coming  
Luke 7:19-20 - John sends two disciples to ask Jesus if He is the " \_\_\_\_\_ " - a Messianic title

**Four Causes of Doubt - 1) Trying Situations**

John, a man used to freedom of movement and open country, is now \_\_\_\_\_ in prison  
Both O.T. & N.T. record many stories of godly people \_\_\_\_\_ difficult circumstances  
Hardships can easily lead to doubt about God's \_\_\_\_\_ and care for us.  
\_\_\_\_\_ are part of life and a negative perspective of them are the seeds of doubt  
James 1:2-3 - Trials test your \_\_\_\_\_, but if they are handled properly they result in greater maturity

**Four Causes of Doubt - 2) Incomplete Revelation**

John did not understand that the first coming of Messiah was to be the \_\_\_\_\_ Servant (Isaiah 53)  
A \_\_\_\_\_ of knowledge and understanding of God's word can easily result in confusion and doubt  
God has simply not revealed many things to us - the \_\_\_\_\_ things belong to Him - Deut. 29:29

**Four Causes of Doubt - 3) Worldly Influence**

Our beliefs and understanding are influenced by the \_\_\_\_\_ in which we live  
Americans tend to expect an \_\_\_\_\_ life - and so can consider minor inconveniences to be major problems  
Christians influenced by the health, wealth & prosperity gospel are troubled when they lack what they \_\_\_\_\_  
Worldly influence & its doubts \_\_\_\_\_ as love for God and understanding the Bible increases

**Four Causes of Doubt - 4) Unfulfilled Expectations**

Expectations are built off of what you \_\_\_\_\_ / understand to be true  
Idealism must be replaced with the ability to deal with \_\_\_\_\_ and its many disappointments  
Doubt arises when life and your expectations of God do not meet  
John took his doubts to \_\_\_\_\_ - so must we

**Jesus' Answer** - Luke 7:21-23



Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ answer the question directly or give John any indication he would be freed from prison  
Jesus' first response is to perform many \_\_\_\_\_ of healing before John's disciples  
Jesus tells them to report to John what they have seen and heard which \_\_\_\_\_ Messianic prophecies  
Confirmation that Jesus was fulfilling the \_\_\_\_\_ about the Expected One would be enough for John  
Jesus concludes with a mild admonition and \_\_\_\_\_ - there is no reproach for John's doubts  
People who doubt need real \_\_\_\_\_ to their questions and encouragement to go back to the Scriptures

### **Conclusions - How to Overcome Doubt**

1) Honestly \_\_\_\_\_ the doubt that is there and take it to the Lord asking Him for wisdom

2) Go back the \_\_\_\_\_ to search for truth - begin with basic truths and build upon them

Romans 5:3-10 is foundational - God has already \_\_\_\_\_ His love for you in Christ

Faith will be tested, but hope in Christ enables perseverance, increasing maturity and \_\_\_\_\_ faith

Help those who doubt by taking them to the Lord, seeking His wisdom, pointing them to the \_\_\_\_\_

### **KIDS KORNER**

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

**Young Children** - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down all the verses mentioned in the sermon and look them up later. 2) Count how many times doubt is mentioned in the sermon. Talk with your parents about the proper way to overcome any doubts you have.

### **THINK ABOUT IT!**

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. Why do some Christians condemn doubt? What do the Scriptures say about how we should respond to those who doubt? What did Jesus do? What had Jesus been doing prior to John's disciples coming to Him in Luke 7:18-20 and Matthew 11:2-3? Where was John at this time? Why was he there? What kind of life had John been living and what was his ministry prior to this time? How would John's current circumstances have contributed to John questioning Jesus about whether He was or was not the "Expected One." What is the meaning of the phrase, "Expected One"? How do difficult circumstances contribute to doubt? Should those who are diligent in serving the Lord expect to avoid difficult circumstances? Why or why not? What are some common hardships that you have seen cause people to doubt? What has caused you to doubt? Examine James 1:2-3. What is the "testing of your faith"? What should be the positive outcome of such testing? What is required for such testing to produce such positive outcomes? What did John lack in his understanding about the purpose of the first coming of the Messiah? How does lack of knowledge and understanding of the Bible contribute to doubting? Why is it so important to interpret Scripture according to its context? Why is it so rare to know the reason for a trial while you are going through it? Why can you trust God even when He does not reveal to you what you would like to know? How do you see yourself influenced by the society in which you live? List out some of the difficult circumstances you have endured? How do those compare to what people in third world countries face daily? How have you seen the "health, wealth and prosperity gospel" influence those who profess to be Christians? How does its ideas about God contribute to doubting? What will cause worldly influence to diminish in a person's life? How do unfulfilled expectations contribute to doubt? What is the source of expectations? What is the basis for your expectations of God? What did John respond to his doubts? What was Jesus' response when John's disciples came? What did He then tell them to tell John? How did that confirm for John that Jesus' was the Expected One? How do you overcome doubt? What is the importance of Romans 5:8 as a basic truth upon which to build in order to overcome doubt? How do you help others overcome doubt?