

THE PRISON OF OUR PERSUASIONS

Matthew 11:1-18; Luke 7:18-28

Introduction: As we continue to think about the prison experiences found in the Bible, we find John the Baptist as he languished in prison. John was cast into prison because of his _____ against the sinful relationship between Herod and his brother's wife. John had preached publicly against this vile and unlawful relationship, and he had been arrested and thrown into prison by the king. While in this prison, John began to have some _____ and concerns about who Jesus was and what He was doing. John's doubts worked _____ his faith and caused him to question the person and work of Jesus.

I. THE _____ OF THIS PRISON Vs 2-3

- A. What John _____ In This Prison *"are you the one who is to come, or do we look for another?"*
1. In his prison, John had come to doubt the very _____ of Jesus.
 2. This is the _____ John who was so bold in his preaching concerning Jesus.
Matt. 3:11-15; John 1:27-36; 3:25-36
 3. There was a time when there was no doubt in John's mind, but when he was thrown into the prison, he _____ to doubt.
- B. What John _____ In This Prison
1. He discovered that absence does _____ make the heart grow fonder. Vs 2 *"Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ. . ."*
 - a. John was locked up and he could no longer _____ the Lord Jesus as He healed and ministered.
 - b. John could no longer _____ the Lord's voice as He preached and taught.
 2. John was removed from the sights and sounds of the ministry of Jesus and his heart had become _____ with doubts and questions.
- C. What John _____ In This Prison
1. When doubts arose in John's heart, he did the _____ thing, he turned to Jesus for the answers he needed.
 2. Instead of wondering and worrying while in prison, John turned his efforts toward getting an answer _____ the Lord.
 3. That is where help will be _____ in a time of doubt!

II. THE DEMONSTRATIONS OF THIS PRISON Vs 4-6

- A. How Jesus _____ John
1. When Jesus heard the disciples of John and their questions
 - a. Jesus didn't send back a stinging word of _____.
 - b. When he heard the doubts that had gripped John's heart, Jesus responded with _____, grace, and love. Look at His response: Vs 4
 2. Jesus was willing to _____ John as he worked through his problem. Jesus reacted in love.
- B. How Jesus _____ John
1. Jesus merely pointed John back to the _____ of God!
 2. Jesus pointed John to all the things He, Jesus, was _____.
- C. How Jesus _____ John
1. The Lord wanted John to know that he did not have to have _____ the answers.
 2. He wanted John to _____ in spite of the mysteries of life.
 3. He wanted John's _____ to be in Jesus in spite of what the eyes saw, the heart felt, or the mind thought.
 4. He wanted John to believe in Him and to simply _____ Him.

III. THE DECLARATIONS OF THIS PRISON **Vs 7-11**

- A. Some of the things that _____ John in his prison
1. When the disciples of John left Jesus, they _____ to John and told him what they had seen and heard.
 2. Evidently, these things helped John _____ his doubts and fears.
 3. We never hear of him expressing doubt _____.
 4. John went to his death, a willing _____ for the glory of the Lord. **Mt 14:1-12**
 - a. Time had elapsed between chapter 11 and 14
 - b. John has had time to _____ what is going on with Jesus and himself
 - c. John demonstrated, by _____ recanting his preaching, his faith in Jesus and God's ultimate plan for his life.
- B. Some things were _____ from John in this prison.
1. After John's disciples left Jesus began to talk about the _____ of John **Vs 7-10**
 - a. He was not a "**reed shaken by the wind**" - John was not blown about by the changing winds of political and religious favor. He was not like a flimsy reed; he was as _____ as a rock.
 - b. He was not "**a man clothed in soft raiment**" - John was not looking for an easy time. He did not come to rule, but he came as a _____. He came as one who prepares the way for the coming King, **Mt 3:3-4**
 - c. He was "**a prophet**" and he was even more than that; he was the _____ fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, **Mal 3:1**
 - d. He was the "**greatest**" of those "**born of women**". This refers to the greatness of his _____ and of his privileges. He was a true man of God; the _____ of the Old Testament prophets; and the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 2. John was a _____ person with a special message concerning the Messiah

Conclusion: Heaven may seem to be _____ some things from you today. Your heart and your mind may be filled with doubts and fears. Let me encourage you to bring those doubts, fears, and problems to the _____ of grace. The Lord may give you the answers you need today. On the other hand, He will give you _____ in abundant measure today if he withholds the answers. No matter what the prison of your perspectives may be God is _____ to do exceedingly abundantly more than we will ever ask or think—_____ Him and not your own conclusions or delusions!