



Are You the Coming One, or Do We Look for Another?

Matt 11:2-3

2 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples 3 and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

NKJV

John was Jesus cousin. John had been filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. John was the son of dedicated priests. The Holy Spirit had led John into the wilderness. John had lived on a diet of locusts and honey. John had stood in the Jordan River preaching and crowds had miraculously come out from the cities to hear and be baptized by him. John had identified and baptized the messiah. John had disciples following him. John had religious leaders inquiring, "Are you the messiah. "

John 3:27-31

27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' 29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

NKJV

Soon John finds himself in prison for preaching repentance to the adulterous king. In the dark recesses of the spiritual warfare that comes upon him, he must confirm that all that he has done was correct. Day after day goes by in solitary confinement. Did he really get it right? Was his life rightly used in service to the Lord? In the darkness of prison he might have asked, "Have I imagined all of this?"

Many of God's servants have periods of intense service. There is so much happening in their lives and ministries that they hardly have time to reflect on what is going on underneath, in their hearts. The apostle Paul is a good example. He was extremely active for years in the ministry. He raised up many churches and preached to thousands. Yet the last years of his life were spent in prison. In that place he wrote the letters that you and I read today. These letters were destined to transform the lives of millions. Samson was a mighty man in the time of the judges. No one could contain him but in the end he wound up in chains with his eyes blinded. From that place he did one last mighty work when he destroyed the idolaters temple. In modern times Watchmen Nee the great Chinese teacher and preacher spent the last twenty-five years of his life in prison.

So many of God's servants find themselves seemingly less useful as they get older than when they were younger. This of course is not true of all. So much of ministry ends in crucifixion and seeming death. This is where the enemy comes in to torment with doubt and unbelief. Can you see John in that prison cell all by himself wondering if all he had done was just a dream? Had he failed?

Seeming failure is one of the great teachers the Lord gives us, just as success can be a great seducer. Failure humbly received, focuses us and forces us towards the Lord. We discover that true success can only be measured by heavenly reward; it will not be revealed in this lifetime. Success cannot be grasped it must be given. *We are not here on earth only to work and earn our reward, we are here to be and become all that God has destined for us.* Before we can work for the master we must begin to be like the master. Before we earn our reward we live our life to become all that the master has destined for us. The idea of salvation is that God clothes us with a new identity. God helps us put off the old pride of performance as our old man is buried with Him. We put on the new person by faith and discover that our vision has changed. God is causing us through his word and the ministry of the Holy Spirit to see things from above not under the darkness of this present age.

So much of what we do in life is measurable. If I fix a broken tool it can easily be seen in due time if my work is effective. If I cook a meal the guests at the table can determine if I did well or poorly. But working in the unseen realm of faith is quite different. John could be wondering, "Did I really hear His voice, did people really change because of my ministry?" We can work with someone as Paul did with Barnabas and then there is a falling out, a difference, and the two no longer work together. We can minister to someone and believe they are healed and delivered and then see that individual fall into temptation and turn away. Conversely we can speak a few words to someone and those Holy Ghost anointed words will deliver them and cause them to turn to Christ. However we might never know that that individual was now free because we never see them again in this life on earth.

John had done a lot of burying. He had baptized thousands of people. But he still had to die himself.

Matt 11:11

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

NKJV

John had done all he knew to do under the law. He was the last of those set aside to prepare the way for the messiah. Now John had to let go of all that he had been in order to become like the master, a resurrected man. John must die in order that the new John might live. The old way must be nailed to the cross that the new and more perfect way emerge. The least in the kingdom of heaven lived in this new resurrected man while John was the last prophet priest of the law. In a sense he was the last Levite. That must be hard, to proclaim the new way and not be able to enter in yourself.

When we seemingly fail in ministry or life it is only one more step toward the resurrected man if we humble ourselves.

The reason John was in this predicament was his denouncing of Herod and Herodias. Herod was committing adultery with his brother Phillips wife and John called him on it as well as his other evil deeds. Truth speaking had led him to prison. How many men and women of God have looked like failures because of truth? What about John Bunyan, who wrote "Pilgrims Progress" in prison because of truth speaking? He used his years of unjust suffering to write one of the greatest works of literature ever written. He saw in his prison cell, that life is a journey. To get to the end one must tread well. He demonstrated as had the apostle Paul, that prison walls could not stop the journey of the soul.

How we conduct ourselves in difficult times has everything to do with who we become in Christ. If we look for another when the going gets rough it tells others that we never found the real thing in those easier times. The same water we get from the kitchen tap will quench our thirst in the desert. It is a matter of taking the water with us in a canteen.

Matthew 25:1-4

1 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. NIV

Jesus is so good, He gives us living water that once swallowed will cause you and I to never thirst again.

John 4:13-14

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

NIV

The only way we stop looking for another is to press on and fully taste of the refreshing drink offered to us. Jesus disciples were able to follow him and participate in the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit. They were able to follow him to the cross and receive the Holy Spirit after the resurrection. John, like Moses could never fully go into the Promised Land. He was a forerunner. His ministry was to make straight the path of the Lord not to follow Him down the path on this earth. His reward would come at the resurrection.

Recently Johnnie Cash died. He made a video before his death called "Hurt." In it he showed all earthly success without the resurrection is failure. Paul put it this way

1 Corinthians 15:17-19

17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

NIV

Philippians 3:7-14

7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. NIV

We can never look for another. It is a matter of fully receiving the one whom God has sent. I have seen brothers begin with a flourish and get sidetracked and seemingly forget Christ's divine supply. I have seen brothers and sisters become enmeshed in their culture and forget the journey John called us to.

Luke 3:4-6

4 As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

"A voice of one calling in the desert,

'Prepare the way for the Lord,

make straight paths for him.

5 Every valley shall be filled in,

every mountain and hill made low.

The crooked roads shall become straight,

the rough ways smooth.

6 And all mankind will see God's salvation.'" NIV

This is the essence of revival. The high places of pride and false success are brought down and the discouraged and depressed are lifted up until equality is flowing amongst the people of God. When His love, His Spirit begins to fill, to flow amongst us, we share His refreshing drink. The overflow spills on our neighbors and fellow travelers. People in darkness begin to see a great light. Salvation breaks forth in our cities. We look one another in the eye and say, "Zion comes, His presence is with us again."

The simplest and at the same time most difficult thing to do is to yield to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I must decrease and He, the Spirit, must increase. Have you been in meetings where the Holy Spirit is starting to move and someone can't stand the waiting and says something, prays something, sings something, and the anointing seems to wane or outright disappear? John was led of the spirit until he fulfilled his purpose. He was to point to Messiah. It is the same with us. We must point to Messiah. We must learn to wait on the Holy Spirit so that He can lead us.

John said, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." The result of this leveling, this awakening is the evidence of the Kingdom. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the evidence of revival.

Luke 4:18-21

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21 and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."
NIV

This is why John decreased. He had finished his work. He knew who and what was coming. He, like most of us, just has to be reminded.

We look to you Lord; *where else can we go to find the words of life?*

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