



## Lesson 16 – Imprisonment and Death of John

Based on Matthew 11:1-11; Matthew 14:1-11; Mark 6:17-28; Luke 7:19-28

John the Baptist had been first in heralding Christ's kingdom, and he was first also in suffering. From the free air of the wilderness and the vast throngs that had hung upon his words, he was now shut in by the walls of a dungeon cell. He had become a prisoner in the fortress of Herod Antipas. In the territory east of Jordan, which was under the dominion of Antipas, much of John's ministry had been spent.

1) How did Herod truly feel about John the Baptist?

**Mark 6:20** For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a \_\_\_\_\_ man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and \_\_\_\_\_ him gladly.

2) Why was John in prison?

**Mark 6:17-19** For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for \_\_\_\_\_ sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not \_\_\_\_\_ for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have \_\_\_\_\_ him; but she could not:

John dealt with him faithfully, denouncing his iniquitous alliance with Herodias, his brother's wife. For a time Herod feebly sought to break the chain of lust that bound him; but Herodias fastened him the more firmly in her toils, and found revenge upon the Baptist by inducing Herod to cast him into prison.

3) What prophecy of Isaiah had John been preaching before his arrest?

**Isaiah 40:4-5** Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made \_\_\_\_\_: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be \_\_\_\_\_, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

4) What did John say Jesus would do?

**Luke 3:17** Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly \_\_\_\_\_ his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

The life of John had been one of active labor, and the gloom and inaction of his prison life weighed heavily upon him. As week after week passed, bringing no change, despondency and doubt crept over him. His disciples did not forsake him. They were allowed access to the prison, and they brought him tidings of the works of Jesus, and told how the people were flocking to Him. But they questioned why, if this new teacher was the Messiah, He did nothing to effect John's release. How could He permit His faithful herald to be deprived of liberty and perhaps of life?

These questions were not without effect. Doubts which otherwise would never have arisen were suggested to John. Satan rejoiced to hear the words of these disciples, and to see how they bruised the soul of the Lord's messenger.



5) What did the Father say from Heaven at Jesus' baptism?

**Matthew 3:16-17** And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the \_\_\_\_\_ of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my \_\_\_\_\_ Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The Baptist did not surrender his faith in Christ. The memory of the voice from heaven and the descending dove, the spotless purity of Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit that had rested upon John as he came into the Saviour's presence, and the testimony of the prophetic scriptures, all witnessed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Promised One.

John would not discuss his doubts and anxieties with his companions. He determined to send a message of inquiry to Jesus. This he entrusted to two of his disciples, hoping that an interview with the Saviour would confirm their faith, and bring assurance to their brethren. And he longed for some word from Christ spoken directly for himself.

6) John sent word to Jesus, what did he ask?

**Matthew 11:2-3** Now when John had heard in the prison the works of \_\_\_\_\_, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for \_\_\_\_\_?

The Saviour did not at once answer the disciples' question. As they stood wondering at His silence, the sick and afflicted were coming to Him to be healed.

7) What did Jesus reply?

**Matthew 11:4-6** Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be \_\_\_\_\_ in me.

The blind were groping their way through the crowd; diseased ones of all classes, some urging their own way, some borne by their friends, were eagerly pressing into the presence of Jesus. The voice of the mighty Healer penetrated the deaf ear. A word, a touch of His hand, opened the blind eyes to behold the light of day, the scenes of nature, the faces of friends, and the face of the Deliverer. Jesus rebuked disease and banished fever. His voice reached the ears of the dying, and they arose in health and vigor. Paralyzed demoniacs obeyed His word, their madness left them, and they worshiped Him. While He healed their diseases, He taught the people. The poor peasants and laborers, who were shunned by the rabbis as unclean, gathered close about Him, and He spoke to them the words of eternal life.

The evidence of His divinity was seen in its adaptation to the needs of suffering humanity. His glory was shown in His condescension to our low estate.



- 8) As John's disciples returned with the Words and deeds of Jesus, what prophecy of Isaiah came to John's mind?

**Isaiah 61:1** The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the \_\_\_\_\_, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

**Isaiah 61:2** To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that \_\_\_\_\_;

**Isaiah 61:3** To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for \_\_\_\_\_, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

The works of Christ not only declared Him to be the Messiah, but showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established.

- 9) What message did Jesus have for John?

**Matthew 11:6** And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be \_\_\_\_\_ in me.

The Saviour's words, "**Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me,**" were a gentle reproof to John. It was not lost upon him. Understanding more clearly now the nature of Christ's mission, he yielded himself to God for life or for death, as should best serve the interests of the cause he loved.

- 10) What did Jesus say later about His cousin?

**Matthew 11:7** And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A \_\_\_\_\_ shaken with the wind?

The tall reeds that grew beside the Jordan, bending before every breeze, were fitting representatives of the rabbis who had stood as critics and judges of the Baptist's mission. They were swayed this way and that by the winds of popular opinion. They would not humble themselves to receive the heart-searching message of the Baptist, yet for fear of the people they dared not openly oppose his work. But God's messenger was of no such craven spirit

- 11) What else did Jesus ask about John?

**Matthew 11:8** But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft \_\_\_\_\_? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

The religious elite loved display, and hoped to dazzle the people, and thus command greater consideration. They were more anxious to gain the admiration of men than to obtain the purity of heart which would win the approval of God. Thus, they revealed that their allegiance was not given to God, but to the kingdom of this world.

- 12) How did John's ministry end?

**Mark 6:21** And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his \_\_\_\_\_ made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;



**Mark 6:22** And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and \_\_\_\_\_ and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

**Mark 6:23** And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my \_\_\_\_\_.

13) What did she ask for?

**Mark 6:24-25** And she went forth, and said unto her \_\_\_\_\_, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the \_\_\_\_\_ of John the Baptist.

Herod was astonished and confounded. The riotous mirth ceased, and an ominous silence settled down upon the scene of revelry. The king was horror-stricken at the thought of taking the life of John. Yet his word was pledged, and he was unwilling to appear fickle or rash. The oath had been made in honor of his guests, and if one of them had offered a word against the fulfillment of his promise, he would gladly have spared the prophet. He gave them opportunity to speak in the prisoner's behalf. They had traveled long distances in order to hear the preaching of John, and they knew him to be a man without crime, and a servant of God. But though shocked at the girl's demand, they were too drunk to protest.

Never more would that voice be heard calling men to repentance. The revels of one night had cost the life of one of the greatest of the prophets.

14) What curse was laid upon Herod?

**Deuteronomy 28:65** And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a \_\_\_\_\_ heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind:

**Deuteronomy 28:66** And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt \_\_\_\_\_ day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life:

**Deuteronomy 28:67** In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine \_\_\_\_\_ wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

The sinner's own thoughts are his accusers; and there can be no torture keener than the stings of a guilty conscience, which give him no rest day nor night.

15) What promise is given to those that stay true to God?

**Colossians 3:3-4** For ye are dead, and your life is \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall \_\_\_\_\_, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

16) **Matthew 28:20** Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you \_\_\_\_\_, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. ***“Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”*** Philippians 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.