

Luke 7:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

Analysis

And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? John's question uses the phrase ὁ ἐρχόμενος (ho erchomenos, "the Coming One"), a messianic title referencing Malachi 3:1 and Psalm 118:26. The alternative—"or look we for another" (ἢ ἄλλον προσδοκῶμεν, ē allon prosdokōmen)—reveals genuine uncertainty. This is remarkable because John had previously identified Jesus as "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29), seen the Spirit descend on Him (John 1:32-34), and declared "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Why does John doubt? Several factors converge: prolonged imprisonment tests faith; John expected Messiah to bring immediate judgment ("the axe is laid unto the root," Luke 3:9; "he will thoroughly purge his floor," 3:17), but Jesus was healing, teaching, and dining with sinners rather than overthrowing Rome or executing judgment on the wicked. John's question is not apostasy but perplexity—his theology needs recalibration. **Jesus' ministry of grace must precede His return in judgment.** The present age is the "acceptable year of the Lord" (4:19), not yet "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 61:2, which Jesus conspicuously did not quote in the Nazareth synagogue).

Historical Context

Jewish messianic expectation in the first century emphasized military deliverance and political restoration of Israel's kingdom. The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal expectations of two messiahs (priestly and kingly) and violent overthrow of Gentile oppression. John's ministry proclaimed imminent judgment (Luke 3:7-17), preparing people for a conquering Messiah. Jesus' actual ministry—healing the sick, raising the dead, preaching good news to the poor—fulfilled Isaiah 35:5-6 and 61:1-2 but didn't match popular militant expectations. John's question reflects this theological tension between expectation and reality.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does John's doubt teach about the reality of faith struggles even among the most spiritually mature believers?
2. How does Jesus' first coming in grace (to save) versus His second coming in judgment (to judge) explain the timing questions John struggled with?
3. In what ways do our own expectations of how God should work sometimes blind us to how He is actually working?

Interlinear Text

καί προσκαλεσάμενος δύο τινάς τῶν μαθητῶν
And calling unto him two G5100 G3588 disciples
G2532 G4341 G1417 G3101

αὐτοῦ ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐπεμψειν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν, λέγων,
G846 G3588 John sent them to G3588 Jesus saying
G2491 G3992 G4314 G2424 G3004

Σὺ εἰ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἄλλον προσδοκῶμεν
thou Art G3588 he that should come or another look we for
G4771 G1488 G2064 G2228 G243 G4328

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