

Matthew 11:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ,
he sent two of his disciples,

Analysis

John the Baptist, imprisoned by Herod, sends disciples to Jesus: 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?' (συ εἰ ὁ ἐρχομενος ἢ ἕτερον προσδοκωμεν). John's question reveals human doubt amid suffering. The one who proclaimed Jesus as Lamb of God (John 1:29) now questions. 'He that should come' (ὁ ἐρχομενος) refers to Messiah. John expected messianic judgment and kingdom establishment; instead he languishes in prison while Jesus teaches and heals. Suffering tests faith. John's honest question isn't unbelief but wrestling with unfulfilled expectations. Jesus welcomes honest questions and provides evidence rather than rebuke.

Historical Context

John imprisoned at Machaerus fortress for denouncing Herod Antipas's unlawful marriage to Herodias (14:3-4). Imprisonment lasted months before execution. Jewish messianic expectations emphasized judgment, liberation, and kingdom establishment. John proclaimed Jesus as judge with winnowing fork (3:12), expecting swift judgment. Instead, Jesus exercised mercy, delayed judgment, and extended grace. This tension—between expected immediate judgment and actual patient mercy—confused many, including John. Early Christians wrestled similarly with delayed second coming.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How should we respond when God's actions don't match our expectations?
2. What does John's doubt despite previous certainty teach about faith amid suffering?
3. How can we maintain faith when prayers seem unanswered and circumstances deteriorate?

Interlinear Text

Ὁ	δὲ	Ἰωάννης	ἀκούσας	ἐν	τῷ	δεσμητηρίῳ	τὰ
G3588	Now	when John	had heard	in	G3588	the prison	G3588
	G1161	G2491	G191	G1722		G1201	
ἔργα	τοῦ	Χριστοῦ	πέμψας	δύο	τῶν	μαθητῶν	αὐτοῦ
the works	G3588	of Christ	he sent	two	G3588	disciples	G846
G2041		G5547	G3992	G1417		G3101	

Additional Cross-References

Mark 6:17 (References John): For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.

Matthew 14:3 (References John): For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

Matthew 4:12 (References John): Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

Matthew 9:14 (References John): Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

John 4:1 (References John): When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

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