

## **The Works of Christ**

### **Matthew 11:1—6**

Approximately 1-1/2—2 years have elapsed from when Jesus began His public ministry with His baptism by John to the choosing of the 12 Disciples. It was shortly after this that Jesus sat down with the Disciples to give them the information they would need as they were to be sent out to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. Jesus finishes up with His instructions at the end of chapter 10. The focus now turns to John the Baptist. John was imprisoned possibly a little more than a year after he baptized Jesus and was now sitting in prison for condemning Herod the tetrarch for taking his brother's wife as his own. It is said that John was imprisoned and eventually killed at the Fortress of Machaerus, Herod's palace southeast of Jerusalem on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea.

### **Doubting John**

Thomas usually gets the bum-wrap for not believing when in fact all the Disciples had their doubts about who Jesus was and none of them really understood He was to die then be resurrected (Luke 9:45). Now we see that John was having his doubts about who Jesus was. About one year earlier John baptized Jesus and proclaimed Him to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He also personally saw the heavens open and the Holy Spirit descend as a dove upon Jesus and the Father declaring Him to be His Son (Luke 3:22). As John was in prison he had heard reports about the works of healing that Jesus was performing and sent two of his disciples to Jesus to see if He was "He who was coming," referring to the Messiah. How could John have seen, heard and prophesized about Jesus and now seemed to be filled with doubts?

We humans seem to need to be reassured often and regularly. Fortunately God understands this and obliges this weakness of ours. There are many examples in Scripture. God came to Abraham several times to reassure him of the promise of making him a great nation. This was repeated with Isaac and Jacob. Gideon is a classic example of God's reassurance when he desired signs to affirm God's words given to him. Today Scripture is our reassurance. We study it, memorize it and meditate upon it all because we need to be reminded of what God is telling us. This is why God wants us to take communion, as an act of remembrance. Paul repeats himself because the people he is writing to need to be reminded (Romans 15:15; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:5; 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:14).

John was also suffering from doubt because being in prison didn't fit in with how he thought things were supposed to play out. He, the Disciples and others were eagerly looking for the coming Millennial Kingdom when Christ would come in His power and glory, defeat Israel's enemies, build the temple and set Israel above all other nations. From John's perspective, something was wrong. All the Disciples experienced this feeling of doubt and confusion about the prophetic Kingdom. John was able to send two of his disciples to ask the Lord if He is the One that they were expecting or shall they look for another.

As usual, Jesus does not answer them directly but compares what He is doing with what Scripture says the Messiah will do. We see in Luke 7 that instead of answering yes or no he has John's disciples follow Him around for the day as He goes about healing the multitudes.

**Luke 7:19—23** <sup>19</sup> 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? <sup>20</sup> When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? <sup>21</sup> And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. <sup>22</sup> Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. <sup>23</sup> And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

He associates His healing of Israel with the Second Coming and the setting up of the Kingdom. This is an important connection between what Jesus is doing at that time with the Prophetic program. Jesus made the blind to see, the lame to walk, lepers cleansed, the deaf to hear, the dead to come back to life, and the poor having the gospel preached to them. According to Isaiah 53:4 Israel's physical healing is wrapped up in Christ. Israel will be healed at the Second Coming (Isaiah 35:3—6). The poor who are receiving the gospel are not physically poor but poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3). They are lacking spiritually and in need of hearing and accepting the good news of the Kingdom. This statement is found in Isaiah 61:1 and is quoted by Jesus in Matthew because the good news is all about the coming Kingdom, which is what Jesus was proclaiming, as were His Disciples. A direct reference to Isaiah 61 is found in Luke 4 that relates Christ's ministry with the prophetic program.

**Luke 4:16—21** <sup>16</sup> And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. <sup>17</sup> And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, <sup>18</sup> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, <sup>19</sup> To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. <sup>20</sup> And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. <sup>21</sup> And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

In this Millennial Kingdom all those who mourn will be comforted (Isaiah 61:2), will have everlasting joy (verse 7) and will be greatly blessed (verse 9). The Millennial Kingdom will be an idyllic time of rest for Israel. There will be no room for tears, death, mourning, crying or pain (Revelation 21:4). This Kingdom will be free of sickness and disease. Jesus was demonstrating a sign to Israel through healings. He was showing Israel that He was their King and that He would heal her if they would only believe on Him as their Messiah. Not only did Jesus do innumerable works (John 21:25), but it would be given to Christ's followers to do even greater works (John 14:12).

In contrast to this period of the proclamation of the Kingdom is this age of Grace. All these signs were done to get Israel's attention and to announce the coming Millennial Kingdom. The healings, signs and wonders were all a part of the prophetic program for Israel and they were now experiencing a foretaste of that Kingdom. However, when Paul came on the scene Israel had been put aside, the prophetic clock had stopped and the healings, signs and wonders began to fade away (1 Corinthians 13:8—13). The Disciples were commissioned to heal the sick and raise the dead as they went out with the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 10:1; Mark 16:19) but Paul was commissioned to preach the Gospel of Grace without the signs and without water (1 Corinthians 1:17). In fact, even though Paul had a great healing spiritual gift early in his ministry (Acts 19:11), he later on was not able to perform any works of healing (2 Timothy 4:20; 1 Timothy 5:23). This is tangible proof that there was a change in how God was dealing with mankind.

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