

Josephus

1. Joseph^{us} the historian tells us that the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod at Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea. The parallel account to Mt. is found at Lk. 7:18-23. From that account we learn that Jesus was in Galilee. He was preaching, teaching and performing miracles.
2. "The works" mentioned in vs. 2 must be both His preaching and His miracles because Jesus speaks of "hearing and seeing."
3. On the expression "the Coming One" cf. Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:7; Lk. 3:16 and Jn. 1:27. The Baptist announced Jesus as "the Coming One," the Messiah.
4. Who was in doubt, the Baptist or his disciples? Jerome, Chrysostom, Luther and the Missouri Synod Fathers think that John's disciples were in doubt. See Ylvisaker (pp. 301-306 in The Gospels) for a good summary. Modern interpreters think the Baptist was in doubt. The author of these notes prefers the view of Luther and Missouri Synod Fathers. But more important than that is the fact that we sometimes have our doubts about the Baptist and Jesus. What do we think of them?
5. Though either John or his disciples were doubting, they were still believers. Therefore, Jesus answers them from Scripture, in this case Is. 29:18; 35:5; 42:18; 26:19; 61:1. His testimony is from the Bible. But when the unbelieving Sanhedrin asked Jesus about Himself, Jesus gave direct testimony. See Mt. 26:63,64. They refused to listen to the Scriptures. Christians trust the Scriptures for their questions.
6. In vs. 5 Jesus speaks both about healing the sick and preaching the Gospel. He told John in vs. 4 about what "you hear and see." One hears the Gospel and sees miracles. Jesus says "The beggars are evangelized. That must mean "preaching the Gospel." The "beggars" are those who come to God empty-handed, repentant, confessing their sins.
7. Jesus says in vs. 6: "Blessed is he who is not offended in Me." The word "blessed" in Greek (makarios) denotes the peaceful relationship between believer and Savior. To be offended means to be entrapped by sin. The best example of this is found at I Cor. 1:23 where St. Paul says: "We preach Christ crucified, an offense to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks." The Jews were offended when He claimed to be the Son of God and Messiah. They considered Him a mere human being and therefore a liar when He claimed to be the Son of God. Jesus warns us here never to be offended at anything He says of Himself. Many people fall away from the faith because they are offended at Jesus.
8. In vss. 7-10 Jesus gives wonderful testimony of John, the Baptist. "When you went out into the desert to hear and see John did you see a weak reed, shaken by the wind?" It is a rhetorical question. It answers itself. "No. John was a preacher with unshaken convictions. Herod imprisoned him because he would not change his preaching." Secondly, did you go out expecting to find John dressed in soft and expensive clothing, like a king?" The answer: "No. He was satisfied with simple food and clothing. Godliness with contentment is great gain. I Tim. 6:6-8." Thirdly, "Did you go out to see a prophet? Yes. But he was more than that. Look at Ex. 23:20 and Mal. 3:1. This prophet was sent just before the Messiah came to prepare His way." In vs. 11 Jesus tells us that there was no one greater than John, the Baptist. Jesus commends the Baptist as a man of conviction, of faithful contentment and the greatest of the prophets. John the Baptist was the only prophet who was prophesied.
9. Jesus was the Prophet of prophets. He was foretold at Deut. 18:15. See Acts 3:22 for fulfillment. But, other than Jesus, the Baptist was the greatest prophet.
10. Mary was the most blessed among women. The Baptist was the greatest of the prophets. The least of Christians is greater than the Baptist. See vs. 11. In each case, it's not because of their person but because of the person and work of Jesus Christ.
11. Jesus does not reject the person who is suffering from doubts about anything in the Bible. Note how gently Jesus deals here with the doubts of either John or his disciples. He says: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Mt. 11:28

Sermon Outline for Mt. 11:2-10, Advent III

Theme: JESUS COMFORTS THE DOUBTING, COMMENDS THE FAITHFUL AND WARNS THOSE WHO ARE OFFENDED IN HIM.

Introduction: Advent is the season of coming: the coming of the Messiah at Christmas, the coming of the Messiah on the last day, and the coming of the Messiah in His Word to us every day now. We, like the people at Jesus' time, have our doubts. Jesus comforts us and assures us. Jesus also commends us when we are faithful like John the Baptist. And He warns us when we are tempted to think that Jesus does not meet our expectations. That's what this text is about: comfort, commendation, warn-
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I-JESUS COMFORTS THE DOUBTING *Vss. 4-5.*

A-John or his disciples had doubts about Jesus. Our Lutheran Fathers thought that John's disciples were in doubt. On one occasion the disciples of John were jealous of Jesus but the Baptist corrected their thinking. Read Jn. 3:25-30. We read that John's disciples made common cause against Jesus. Read Mt. 9:14; Mk. 2:18; Lk. 5:33. Finally, John's way of life was different from that of Jesus. Read Mt. 11:18,19. Modern Lutherans think that John was in doubt. He was sitting alone in prison. Secondly, John had warned the people about their sins. But Jesus went about doing good and preaching forgiveness. Perhaps John began feeling that maybe Jesus was not the prophesied Messiah.

B-Whether it was John or his disciples that doubted cannot now be settled with certainty. But one thing is certain. Their problem was not unbelief, but doubt. They had not rejected Him but were wondering whether He truly was the Messiah. How did Jesus deal with them? He told them to listen to and look at what He said and did. That was foretold in the Scriptures: Is. 26:19; 29:18; 35:5; 61:1. He preached forgiveness of sins to the repentant and healed peoples' sicknesses to prove that He was the Son of God. What should we do when we have doubts? Do as Jesus said: Listen to what He says and look at what He did and does. Do not listen to Satan who plants doubts as he did in Adam and Eve.

II-JESUS COMMENDS THE FAITHFUL

A-Jesus commended the Baptist. In vs. 11 Jesus says: "Verily I say to you, there has not arisen among those born of women one greater than John the Baptist." Jesus gives His reasons in vss. 7-10: *not*

1-He was a man of unwavering convictions. Vs. 7. He was not afraid to convict people of their sins, including King Herod. He was afraid to tell the Pharisees about their sins. Mt. 3:7,8. But he also comforted people with baptism and forgiveness of sins. Jn. 1:29; Lk. 3:3.

2-He lived a simple life of contentment. Vs. 8. John was not materialistic. He was content with food and clothing. I Tim. 6:6-8. His food was locusts and wild honey. His clothing was simple. He did not offend people with a rich life-style.

3-He was more than a prophet. Vss. 9-10. He was the forerunner of the Lord and he carried this out faithfully even when he was imprisoned.

B-Jesus commends the faithful today. Our works do not save us. Rom. 3:28. Faith and salvation do not proceed from man's works. Eph. 2:8-10. But God does bless the faithfulness of Christians. Read Rev. 2:10; 14:13; Mt. 5:12. The thief on the cross asked to be remembered. He was. And every faithful Christian is remembered by Jesus.

III-JESUS WARNS THOSE WHO ARE OFFENDED IN HIM. vs. 6.

A-What this means. Read I Cor. 1:23; Mt. 13:57; 26:31; Jn. 6:61; 16:1. To be offended in Jesus means to desert Him because He does not live up to man's expectations. The Jews deserted Him because He did not look like the Son of God. They deserted Him because He told them about their sins. They deserted Him because He appealed to the common people who rejected the Jews. The whole Bible warns us not to be offended in Jesus.

B-What this says to us: If we are offended in Jesus we will end like the Jews who crucified Him. Jesus was warning the Baptist and his disciples not to let their doubts lead to offense. So it is with us. Beware!