

THE IMPRISONMENT OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

- John was imprisoned by Herod for preaching out against his sin of taking his brother's wife as his own. (Mt. 14:3-4)
- John was taken east of the Jordan, to Machaerus, a Herodian fortress, where he was kept imprisoned until his death, according to Josephus.

THE QUESTION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST | VV. 2-3

- John's question was plain: *are you he that should come?*
 - The fact that John is asking one who *has come* if they are the *one coming* necessitates that the *one coming* implies a specific role.
 - The "coming one" was a metaphor for the Messiah.
- Some thoughts about a questioning spirit:
 - The desire to investigate is laudable, and should not be considered *doubt*.
 - Every human leader questions his own declarations, and rightly so.
 - Healthy skepticism is the desire to question and investigate.
 - Unhealthy skepticism is the belief that knowledge is impossible.

THE EVIDENCE THAT IS THE ANSWER | VV. 4-6

- Jesus' answer was not verbal, but visual.
- In effect, Jesus said, "compare what was prophesied with what is happening, then make your own conclusions."
- Jesus summarized the evidence by saying, "Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me." Literally, "does not stumble over me."
- Is Christ a stumbling stone or a Corner stone for you?

THE TRIBUTE TO JOHN | VV. 7-15

- John's strength praised – vv. 7-8
- John's prophecy praised – vv. 9-10
- John's role contrasted to that of the Kingdom of which he preached – v. 11
- John's dispensation announced – vv. 12-14
 - The Dispensation of the Law and the Prophets is clearly demarcated from the message of John.

- The Kingdom *suffers violence and violent men take it by force* can mean one of two things:
 - Some "force the Kingdom" into existence. The Kingdom will be established by the "zeal of the Lord of hosts," and "not by might, nor by power." Whether the establishment of the Kingdom is by militant warfare or "loving" social gospel methods, it is, nonetheless, "being forced." The work of man will not establish the Kingdom, its source being "not of this earth."
 - The Kingdom of heaven is "pressing itself", and yet men of "brash confidence, even willing to be violent" resist it, and "thieve it away."

THE FAILURE OF JOHN'S PREACHING | VV. 16-19

- If you base your ministry on public opinion, you will forever be chasing the wind.

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST | MATTHEW 14:1-12

- Herod clearly had some belief in resurrection and in the miracles of Jesus, but refused to allow the evidence to lead to the right conclusion.