

The Character of Jesus 20
John the Baptist's Question
Matthew 11:2 – 30, Luke 7:18 – 35

- Characteristic: Expectation of discernment
 - Using the Luke account
 - This is different than the encounter with Nicodemus (John 3:1 – 15) in which Jesus challenged him to rise above the mundane and simplistic to the heart of the matter. In this scene, Jesus expects His audience to make logical deductions from the evidence at hand, and not be diverted by the illogic of others.
 - (18 – 20) Whether John had begun to question his own conclusions (John 1:29 – 36) or just got tired of answering the same question again and again is unknown. Either way, John went to the source.
 - (21 – 22) Apparently, Jesus' answer was to heal many people and cite Isaiah 35:5 – 6, and 61:1 – 3. The plain evidence was expected to overcome their doubts.
 - (23 – 28) Rather than focusing on the confusion or unbelief of the disciples of John, Jesus praised and endorsed John and his work
 - Remember what impressed you about John. Let that cut through message of the nay-sayers.
 - Remember the prediction about John in Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1. The predictions are solid. Do not allow complexity to distract from the facts.
 - John was not just a prophet, but a unique type of messenger. Do not let his work be minimized.
 - (29 – 30) As usual, Jesus' logic strengthened those who had accepted John, but further alienated those who had not.
 - (31 – 35) Beware of those who always find fault.
- Applications:
 - When we get confused, do we turn to the simplicity of the story, or to complex theology?
 - The gospels describe how godly character works. The letters describe how we allow our baggage and our culture to mess that up. Keep it simple.
 - A review of evidence and predictions cuts through cloudy thinking.
 - Evidence is the first and most important characteristic of faith (1 Corinthians 15:1 – 8). Maintain that connection to clarify what is important.
 - Pointing out the good efforts and ideas of others brings people together.
 - Evaluate everything, keep the good stuff (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Why talk about what has been discarded?
 - Don't be afraid that you might offend someone with evidence. They will be offended at anything because that is their nature.
 - Be kind, gentle, patient, and gracious. Then you know the offense was not because you were obnoxious.
 - Neither listen to fault-finders nor be one.
 - Weaknesses in doctrine create potential structural failures. So, patching up those holes is important.
 - Trust God to work out the differences (Philippians 2:13, 3:15).