

Matthew 20-06-07b

We're ready to resume our study this Sunday morning in the Gospel of Matthew, picking up now in chapter 11. Let's read our passage, get an idea of what we're about to see. Now, it came to pass when Jesus finished commanding his 12 disciples that he departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.

It's probable that this just means the cities of the people, but if you interpret it, wouldn't literally the antecedent for there is disciples and it would be their hometowns, which would mean Capernaum and Cana and a few other places. In any case, he is teaching and preaching. Notice they are two different things, teaching and preaching.

Teaching, didasko, is to communicate doctrinal truth in this context. Preaching is the proclamation of the issue that the kingdom is at hand. And these are often found together because you make a point that there is an issue to be addressed and those who are interested will then stick around for the teaching.

And when John heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to him, are you the coming one or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said to them, go and tell John the things which you hear and see. The blind see and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of me.

As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John, what did you go out in the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in king's houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you and more than a prophet. Remember, we just saw receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet and receiving a prophet's reward.

This is he of whom it is written, behold, I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way before you. And that of course is Malachi chapter three, verse one, the same book that says, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord. Assuredly, I say to you, verse 11, this is 1111 now of Matthew.

Among those born of women, there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist, but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force for all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. That's a good place to stop. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Where have you heard that phrase? It is at the end of every letter to the seven churches in revelation chapter two and three. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. Notice the spirit is not mentioned here because these are the days of materiality, physicality, physical rituals, the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh.

The witness is physical to the churches. It is spiritual. Well, let's back up to the beginning.

Now it came to pass when Jesus finished commanding his 12 disciples, the only place where this word is used of Jesus and his teaching, Jesus commanding his disciples, his 12 disciples. He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. So you have 13 separate witnesses, 12 plus one going throughout the land of Israel.

What is the significance of the number 13 in Israel? Remember now we've got 12 disciples, they're in pairs. So you could say that there's six witnesses of pairs, right? And then there is the Lord Jesus by himself making the seventh. So you've got the human beings doing six separate witness ministries and the Lord Jesus himself is the perfecting seventh, right? If you look at the individual disciples, you've got 12 plus the Lord Jesus making 13.

Where have you seen the number 13 before relative to Israel? How many tribes are there in Israel? 13, right? Because the tribe of Joseph is split into Ephraim and Manasseh. And so you take the Levites out as not having an inheritance. And then you have the 12 tribes inheriting the land.

The Levites inheritance is the Lord. And so the Levites, if you look at them as the 13th tribe, all the other tribes inheriting physical land, the Levites had the inheritance of the Lord. Jesus Christ as a priest after the order of Melchizedek is the 13th witness in this 12 man witness that's going out.

And then the Lord Jesus similar to the tribe of Levi, he's the authority and the direct link to God himself. At any rate, he departs from there to teach and preach in their cities. John heard in prison about the works of Christ.

How do you hear about something in prison? Do you think the guards are going to come in and give John the 10 o'clock news every day? John is being visited by fellow believers, right? He's got some people coming. Remember the standard of the sheep and goats judgment. When I was in prison, you visited me.

Here's John. It might be dangerous to be associated with him. Here's a guy that's locked up.

You're obviously in sympathy with him. You're coming to visit him. There is some risk involved in people associating and identifying with John who is so far on the outs with

Herod that he's been incarcerated.

And yet they go anyway. And there are evidently regular visits to John to comfort him, encourage him, spend time in fellowship with him. And these people are keeping track of the Lord Jesus and his ministry and his disciples.

And John had identified him as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And so his John's disciples are keeping him apprised of the works of the Lord Jesus. Notice it doesn't say the words.

It says the works. Now this would include his preaching and teaching, no doubt. But the word here is works.

When John heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples. Now you just want to go on to the next verse, but we need to stop here. Why did he send two disciples? Why didn't he just send one disciple? Why didn't he send a gang of disciples? He sent two disciples.

Why? I ask myself. Maybe nobody cares about this but me. But I'm just intrigued.

John's got any number of disciples. There's a whole bunch of people that stuck with him. And so I've got a couple of questions about these disciples.

First of all, John sends two, no more, no less. He sends two. Why would he do that? Well, we know from the scriptures in Deuteronomy 19:15 in the law of Moses that nobody should be convicted on the testimony of a single witness, but in the mouth of two or three witnesses, a thing is established.

Remember that? That's Deuteronomy 19:15. It's quoted by Paul, the apostle in second Corinthians 13:1. He says, this will now be the third time that I'm coming to you.

And he says, two or three witnesses established a thing. And he says, I've already spoken to you twice and you'd better shape up because at the third time you could be in big trouble. You know, do I need to come in power and, you know, cracking a big whip the third time you can read that 13th chapter, second Corinthians, but Paul quotes that.

So we have an old Testament and a new Testament. We have two witnesses to the two witnesses principle, two or three witnesses. The thing is established.

Now, why does it take two or three witnesses to establish a thing? Why isn't one witness good enough? There is any number of examples I could use, but I, there's one that sticks in my mind and I apologize in advance for it. But on the old Carol Burnett show, uh, Carol Burnett was, was playing this chatty housewife. And I think Harvey Corman was her husband.

And she's trying to tell a story to some guests that have come over. And the husband

keeps correcting her. Every time she gives a detail, he's, you know, she says, well, I went down there and there were three men.

And he says, honey, there were only two or what all the way through. And it just gets more and more comical because she can't get this story finished because every detail she gets is wrong. And her husband corrects her.

And she finally, you know, violence ensues. But this is the story of many marriages and many conversations. And it's really helpful if you want to find the truth in the middle somewhere to hear from more than one witness, because not everybody can remember everything.

Um, I could give an example from this morning, but I won't, I'll, I'll give it later. But, uh, two people can, can observe the same thing and come away with, with different memory or different reaction or noted different details. And it is very helpful, uh, just from a practical point of view to have a couple of different witnesses.

Have you ever gone to the doctor and they're going to give you the results of the test and the prognosis and what you need to do and what's going to happen next. And you like to bring somebody in with you, especially if they had to dilate your eyes or shoot you with some anesthetic or something to do the test. And you're sitting there kind of reeling anyway, and you want somebody sitting there.

Uh, well, I believe the doctor said, I take 10 pills the first day and fight. Oh no, no, no, no, no. That you've got 10 pills.

You take one a day for 10 days. You need somebody there to, you know, provide a second and perhaps even a third witness. So from a practical point of view, it makes sense.

I'm more interested in the biblical point of view. Why does the Bible decree two or three witnesses? Well, in the biblical examples, we find the answer. And I want to look at the biblical examples where God uses two individuals to accomplish a task.

And I'm only going to be able to cover some of them. These are representative. This is not exhaustive.

You, and if you think of some, just fill them in your notes. I'm just going to give you a few. Um, remember, uh, uh, Abraham in Genesis chapter 18 and chapter 19, where he's under the Oaks of Mamre and suddenly God visits him.

How many individuals come on that occasion? And, and Abraham makes a meal for him. Wait here. He slays the fatted calf and Sarah cooks a meal and they entertain.

And, uh, shall God hide from Abraham what he's about to do. And he's, he predicts the

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and Abraham pleads for lot. And it's, it says God came to him, but there are these, Abraham sees three quote unquote men.

Well, these are from the divine realm type of men. These are not passers by from a nearby village. This is God and two companions, evidently angelic.

In fact, we know they're angelic companions. When you get to the next chapter, God speaks to Abraham and tells him what he's about to do. Confirm some covenant promises and so on.

God leaves. The two angels go to Sodom and Gomorrah and yank out lot and his wife and two daughters. Right.

And it specifically says in 19, they are two angels. So the third individual is God himself. Um, in a manifest form, no man has seen God and lives.

Well, you've got to take that in context. You've got the 70 elders, plus Joshua and Moses and a couple of others who go halfway up the mountain and have a meal and they see God and they are not destroyed. Uh, so it is possible to see God.

Ezekiel saw God, uh, any number of prophets, John, the revelator saw, saw God it's Moses saw the glory of God in, in, from, uh, hindward perspective. At any rate, there's those two individuals and the two individuals go and speak to lot famously, the homosexual surround the house and try to pull them out and have their way with them. And, uh, lot offers his daughters in their stead and so on.

But there are two individuals who go, why two, why didn't God just send Gabriel to go get lot out? He's used Gabriel for other things. Talk to Daniel, talk to Zachariah, talk to Mary. Why didn't Gabriel go? He sent two angels.

There is a pattern in scripture, and I'll tell it to you now. And you can watch for it in these subsequent examples. When there are two angels, two witnesses, two individuals involved that one of the common denominators that I observe is it is in cases where there is a response on the part of those who see them or who are communicated to by them, there is a response and the two witnesses both observe the response.

So in this first case in, in Sodom, these two angels go and they hear the response of lot and his wife and his daughters and any other individuals. I believe that daughters are betrothed or some inkling that they're betrothed and those guys don't come. And that's why the daughters are all weeping.

And you have the whole Moab and Ammon thing later on. But when there are two individuals present in my observation, there is always some response that is being observed, measured, received, taken into account. And these two angels go in, in, uh, Genesis 18 and 19.

Uh, when the law is given on Mount Sinai, the 10 commandments are given. And the two witnesses are Moses on the mountain and the people down below the mountain. Initially, later on, Moses goes back up and receives the tablets inscribed by the finger of God.

And who goes with it? Joshua. Joshua is there. And this is, uh, uh, Exodus 24, 13.

If you want a reference for that, this is Joshua, Moses, servant accompanying him back up the mountain. And you remember famously again, they come down and hear the noise of war in the camp, but it's celebration, but Moses and Joshua are bringing the tablets back down at the beginning of the whole deliverance from Egypt. Who are the two witnesses? Moses is at the burning bush.

And he says, I'm insufficient. And God says, Aaron. And from then on, in many cases, just one example is, uh, numbers chapter two, verse one, God spoke to Moses and Aaron at the striking of the rock.

It's Moses and Aaron at the speaking to the rock. It's Moses and Aaron. So you have two witnesses.

God speaks to Moses and Aaron, and then they convey God's word to the people. But there are two witnesses. And you wonder if every once in a while, you know, Aaron would nudge Moses and say, and don't forget the Lord said this.

Oh yes. You know, uh, sanctify yourselves on the third day and so on. So, but there is a response required from God's law coming down the mountain, right? There's a response required from the people when Moses and Aaron witness to the commands of God in the particular circumstances during those 40 years.

Um, so the, uh, you move forward and I could give you many examples, but think about, uh, in first Kings in the early part of second Kings, you have Elijah and Elisha as a dual prophetic witness to the Northern kingdom, Elijah and Elisha. And you find them together in first Kings chapter six, verse 23, where they crossed the Jordan. And, uh, I want a double portion of your spirit and the man falls and he whacks the water and comes back across that.

There are a lot of dualities there, but Elijah, Elisha, and we've talked in detail about the significance of that as, as an old Testament, new Testament law and grace, uh, example in, in prospect with Elijah and Elisha, but those are the two primary prophetic witnesses to Israel. You have many other prophets who have episodic witnesses and periodic interactions with the people, but Elijah and Elisha are the biggies, uh, during the monarchic period. You have, uh, in the tabernacle itself on the mercy seat, how many cherubim are on the mercy seat? Do you ever wonder why two? Why not one? Why not just have a big Gabriel there? There is a cherub on each end and their wings are outstretched later on when, when, uh, Solomon makes the, the temple and there is still

the ark with the mercy seat on top, but then he makes two 15 foot tall cherubim to stand in the Holy of Holies and overarch their wings over the ark and it's smaller version of two cherubim.

And so you end up with four cherubim in that Holy of Holies, uh, overarching the ark and the mercy seat and, uh, puts you in mind of, of later visions where there are four cherubs that surround God's throne and it is the unfolding and the progress of revelation. Later on, uh, there are, um, in Ezekiel, the millennial temple, which is, you can consider to be the true second temple. God doesn't honor the fake second temple that, that they built in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah and the glory cloud didn't fill it.

There's no ark inside it. And, um, the next true temple where God's glory will dwell is the one that Ezekiel sees for the millennial age. And in Ezekiel 41, 18, he describes the cherubim that are carved into the walls.

And it's very fascinating. This is, uh, Ezekiel 41, 18, and the cherubs are interleaved. They're alternating with palm trees.

And the cherubim that are carved into the walls have two faces. It's a single cherub with two faces. One face is the face of a man.

The other face is the face of a lion. And each face is looking at the palm tree closest to it. So the face of a man is looking at the palm tree on one side.

The face of the lion is looking at the palm tree on the other. And you have this alternation of, of dual faced cherubs. And this is a double, a double witness, humanity and the lion of the tribe of Judah, uh, who is in fact the son of God himself.

So, uh, any, any number of, uh, examples in Numbers chapter seven, verse 89, one of many examples where it says, God will speak from between those cherubim on the mercy seat. God's presence is in the midst of those two angelic presences. And God speaks from their midst.

And many times God speaks from the mouths of two witnesses. Jesus has just sent out six, two man witness teams, and there's a reason for it. Um, you will remember that at the resurrection, Matthew and Mark talk about a single angel.

Uh, Mark says there was an angel that rolled away the stone. Matthew says there was an angel seated at the right side of the, of the interior where, where the body of the Lord would be. I think I have that right.

Matthew and Mark both speak of one angel. One of them talks about the one inside the tomb. The other one talks about the angel that rolls away the stone, but in Luke and in John, both of them, Luke 24, four and John 20, 12, Luke 24, four, John 20, verse 12.

You have the two angels who are witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, two angels speak. And you'll remember shortly thereafter, after the 40 days where Jesus spends time with his disciples appears to individuals, he appears to James, he appears to Peter, he appears to upwards of 500 in one place. Then he goes out to the mountain and ascends and is caught up into glory.

And then somebody says, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing into the heavens? This same Jesus is going to come back in like manner as you've seen him go. Acts chapter one, verse 10, two divine witnesses sort of chide the disciples. Why are you standing here gazing into heaven? He's going to come back in like manner as you've seen him go.

Two witnesses in Acts 1.10. You have the two witnesses of Revelation, chapter 11, verse three, that we're well familiar with that. We've reviewed it in recent days. You can go all the way back to Genesis chapter two, verse 24, where the man leaves his father and mother.

That's two people and cleaves unto his wife. That's two people and they become one flesh. And somebody asked me a question about the Trinity the other day.

And it's just too confusing. You know, how can God be three and be one and three in one? Is he three gods? Is he one God? And as I've told you before, there's nothing mysterious in my mind, and maybe I'm just too simple, but it's not hard to understand. Do you understand marriage? Do you understand that there's a husband and a wife and they are two separate individuals? But God says they become one.

God says in a marriage, the husband and wife become one. Well, one what? Well, we call it a couple. It's the couple.

It's the hulls. It's the fill in your last name here, right? And there is a sense in which when they file their taxes, they're married, filing jointly. I'm one household.

We are one for the purposes of taxation. We combine our income. We combine our deductions.

Everything that happens in our household, it's Sam and Patty married filing jointly, right? For the purposes of the government, we're one entity. We file one return for other purposes. We're separate.

When she goes to the doctor, I don't want them doing to me what they do to her. She's got a different experience and vice versa. She doesn't need a plate screwed into her wrist.

And I don't need to, you know, whatever procedure might be required on the feminine side. There are times when we act independently. There are times and purposes for

which we are treated as a unity.

It is God incorporated. If you understand marriage, all you've got to do is add one person and you've got the Trinity. It's God incorporated.

There are three separate individuals who act uniformly and are treated as a unity in many contexts and for many purposes, but who are individuals and have individual personalities, responsibilities, and even experiences. God, the father did not die on the cross. God, the Holy spirit did not become flesh and dwell among us.

All of them were involved in creation, but with different roles. The Holy spirit is hovering on the face of the water. Jesus without him was not anything made that was made.

John chapter one, God, the father speaks and says, let there be. And there was, it's the plan of God, the father. It is manifest in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is powered by God, the Holy spirit. These three are one, not difficult. Understand marriage can understand the Trinity.

If the Bible says two people can become one, shouldn't be hard to understand the other. So when you talk about the two witnesses in revelation chapter 11, verse three, uh, you can talk about marriage. That is two with the same message, two hearts beating with a single thought or whatever that poetic thing is that I've forgotten.

Um, uh, a couple raising their children should be a united front, should have a, uh, consistent policy for discipline. There shouldn't be one that's a taskmaster and the other, that's a merciful runner of interference that there should be consistency in, in policy and in, uh, justice, criminal justice for your juvenile delinquents. And when they malfunction and disobey, there shouldn't be one penalty implemented by the father and a different one by the, they can take different roles in that.

Wait till your father gets home is, you know, a time honored institution in American culture, but, uh, it, it should be united. The two should be one when it comes to approach, when it comes to consistency, when it comes to love, when it comes to discipline, when it comes to putting selves out on behalf of children and so on. But, uh, marriage is, is a dual function.

And if you're going to train up your children and the way they should go, that witness should be consistent from both sides. Um, this is why in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 25, we forsake not the assembling of ourselves together. Because remember, Jesus said, where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst.

Is Jesus not in the midst if I'm by myself? Well, there is a sense and a function and a type of ministry where Jesus says, I and my father will come to the one who hears my words and keeps them. We'll come to him and make our home with him. He doesn't say I and

my father and the spirit to the dismay of hyper Trinitarians.

They say, well, why didn't he mention the spirit? Well, the spirit's already there. The spirit never leaves us when we are sealed with the Holy spirit. That's the mark of our redemption.

And he's always there, but the son and the father are not necessarily there. If we have his words and keep them and we love him, Jesus promised I and my father will come to him and make our home with him. And that is a dual and trifold witness from God himself.

And what a, what a privilege, what an opportunity, what a blessing, but we forsake not the assembly in Hebrews 10 25. It's important for us to be together the more, the merrier, but you need at least two or three for this fellowship function. It is a useful, beneficial, necessary function that the witness of scripture and the witness of the spirit be confirmed and be checked against and with the understanding of our fellow believers.

This is why we pray together. This is why we converse together. This is why we discuss the truth of God's word together so that we can fill in missing perspectives, uh, points that didn't occur to us.

Now, God, the Holy spirit can do a lot of this. If we don't have an immediate fellow believer, uh, God's not going to leave us orphans. He will, you know, Jesus said, I will not leave you orphans.

I will come to you. And he comes in the, in the ministry of his own presence. He comes in the ministry of his spirit, which is the Holy spirit.

But we need that association to help with instruction and rebuke and correction in doctrinal things. And it keeps us from being myopic. It keeps us from being subjective.

It aids in objectivity to witnesses. That's why old Testament Israel was told you can't convict somebody unless you've got at least two and preferably three witnesses, objectivity, get at the truth. And it is just as true.

Now, why does John send two disciples? John is an old Testament guy, man born of woman, none greater than John. Nobody in old Testament days surpasses John. He knows his old Testament backwards, forward, sideways, upside down, Bible codes, you name it.

John knows it. And John knows when he sends to the Lord Jesus to send two witnesses because of these principles, he doesn't want to miss anything. The Lord Jesus says by way of response, I don't just want one trusted individual to go.

I want to, it's important to be in fellowship with other believers of like mind. Now here's

my second question. And we're getting close to the end of the time.

So I'm going to have to make it fast. Here's my second question. What was John's purpose? What did he say down at the Jordan? Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

He must increase. I must decrease. I'm not worthy to unlatch his sandal and his disciples, John's disciples, Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip.

What do they do? Here's John. They're with John. Here comes Jesus.

John says, there's Jesus. Those guys go with Jesus and are now the disciples of the Lord. So my question to you is, why does John still have disciples? I must decrease.

He must increase. There he is. Some people didn't leave.

Why? Ask yourself the question. If you'd been down there, listening to the John the Baptist, and you believed his witness, and he says, there is the Lord Christ, son of God, Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. This is the long promised coming one.

Would you say, well, there he goes. Tell me more. Why would you stay with the messenger and let the message walk away? Why would you listen to the prophet and stick with the prophet and what he is prophesying and the fulfillment and the literal physical material son of God is standing right over there and you stay with this guy? The answer might not be what you expect.

Let me put it this way in the plan and purpose of God. Does John the Baptist need fellowship, encouragement, and support as a faithful servant of God? Remember how we began this morning? They also serve who only stand and wait. Could there be a legitimate reason to stick with John? Even when the Lord Jesus Christ is walking the earth and every fiber of your being, because you believe John's message, you're a faithful follower of God.

You are excited and joyful at the fulfillment of God's promises after centuries and centuries of waiting. Here it is. Could there be a legitimate reason to stay with John? Is God going to leave John an orphan in prison with no visitors, nobody to tell him the news, nobody to vindicate his identification of the Lord Jesus Christ and tell what great things are happening? Everybody has followed the Messiah and the exciting miracles that he's doing and the wonderful teaching that he's doing and John's in prison and he's just isolated.

I would submit to you that there are two reasons to be still a disciple of John. One is not a good reason. The other is a wonderful self-sacrificial reason.

There are people who might have made an issue out of John himself. Maybe they admire

him for his self-sacrifice and his rustic ways and his command of his message and his diligence and his faithfulness, and they are disciples of John more so than anything else. If a man loves father and mother, if a man loves the messenger more than me, he cannot be my disciple.

He's not worthy of me. If somebody was making an issue of John and stuck with him because, well, I don't know this Jesus and he's got his own followers and I just am stuck on John, that would be a bad reason. I suspect that those who remained with John heard John's message, but recognized that God had given them a special and unique opportunity to be a blessing to the one who had been a blessing to them.

And they did it for godly reasons. John would not have had anybody to send to the Lord Jesus if some people had not recognized that God had given them the opportunity and the gift of being a blessing to John and staying with him in his hour of need, being those who at the sheep and goats judgment saw that Jesus himself essentially is sick and in prison and visited him. And they say, he loves the Lord Jesus.

Somebody needs to minister to him. I've got means, motive and opportunity. I'm going to stay here.

I really admire and respect these two disciples who, with all of the excitement and understandable joy at the presence of the Messiah himself and believing every particle of what John communicated, stayed with John. That took fiber, that took spiritual maturity to recognize God has assigned me my place here with John as much as I would love to travel around with Peter and Andrew, James and John and these other lucky so-and-sos that are getting to spend their days, nights, evenings and weekends with Jesus himself. Somebody needs to be here with John.

I'm that person. I'm going to stick. I'm going to stay.

And there's at least two. And they are great, great believers, self-sacrificial, expressing the love of God toward John. So don't overlook these guys and just pass them by.

They're not just, they're not just the telephone. There's two of them because they are going to be faithful witnesses and they're going to bring back to, they're going to leave the Lord Jesus. They love seeing him and talking with him.

What an honor, but they're going to go back to John. And they're going to continue their ministry to comfort and encourage and visit John in prison. So he sent two of his disciples, circle these two disciples.

These are great, great men of faith in my view. And through them, John says to the Lord Jesus, are you the coming one or do we look for another? Many of you have been through this episode before, and you know where this is going, that there was an expectation of a conquering Messiah. And there is also the expectation of the suffering servant.

John had identified the Lord Jesus as the lamb of God, i.e. John had said, behold, the suffering servant who is going to take away the sin of the world through his suffering. John is manifestly clear that Jesus is the suffering servant. That's the first thing out of his mouth when he sees Jesus standing on the banks of the Jordan, there's the lamb, right? But the Old Testament is replete with predictions of the conquering Messiah who will subdue the nations and subjugate them with a rod of iron and redeem and vindicate and restore and bless national Israel and be their king.

So John's question, as you well know, is, are you the coming one? Capital C, capital O, are you the conquering king Messiah as well as the lamb, or are you the suffering servant? And there is a different and second Messiah, or perhaps a different and second coming where you are going to be the overcomer, the coming one who overcomes. That's the question. And Jesus is going to answer it in typical Lord Jesus fashion.

He isn't going to just say, yes, I'm the coming one. He's going to make John use what he knows. If John is in prison and his disciples are visiting him and you go back to verse two, John heard in prison about the works.

You see that? John heard in prison about the works. These faithful people ministering him have been giving him daily reports on the activities of Jesus and the disciples. So does John already have the answer to his question? Because Jesus is going to say, you know, those works that you've heard about, just think about those and you have your answer.

Take what you know, check the word of God, you have your answer. John doesn't get a yes or no from Jesus. Jesus says, John, plumb the depths of what you already know.

This is a great message for us. Look around at what is happening, check the word of God, and you have the answer to your question. You're not tested above what you're able to bear.

You are not challenged with questions to which you have no answers. You don't need a supernatural visitation. You don't need an angel in the middle of the night.

It's a reason why it says John had heard of Jesus works. I'm really glad he sent these disciples because there's wonderful applicational value in this episode. But technically speaking, John already had the answer to this question before he sent them.

Those same disciples had already brought him the answer by reporting the words and works of the Lord Jesus. But for our benefit, and I think if you look at the two interactions between Jesus and John, remember, John says, Lord, you ought to be baptizing me. And Jesus says, suffer it to be so now, for it is necessary to fulfill all righteousness.

This interaction between you and me is necessary to make a point. I think John probably also already knew the answer. He was pretty sure, but it was necessary to fulfill all righteousness that he send these two witnesses and have the Lord Jesus answer given

and recorded in scripture for us.

So both times when John and Jesus interact, it is symbolic and communicates worlds of wonderful divine truth to those who are looking on, and that includes us. And it's a wonderful service. Not only did John witness in his day, but he has witnessed down through the ages.

His faithfulness to his calling has resonated down through the centuries and blessed every believer since that has bothered to look. That's the nature of your life and my life. If you receive a profit in the name of a prophet, you get a profits reward.

If you look at the ministry of John the Baptist and appreciate it and receive it and benefit from it in terms of application, your reward will be as great as John's. Isn't that something? Do I seriously think I deserve the reward of John the Baptist? Jesus says, if you receive, if his, if his example and his perseverance was not wasted on us, we share in the blessing and the reward that John himself, we become a part. Remember, remember when Paul tells some of his audience, you are our crown, you are our reward.

That's how John's going to feel when you meet him someday and say, you know, I got so much out of looking at your ministry at the Jordan and looking at your ministry from prison. And that interaction you had with the Lord Jesus was a huge blessing to me. It motivated me.

It encouraged me. I appreciate it. That's John's crown.

That's John's reward. So what an opportunity to share in his reward by paying attention to what he so self-sacrificially accomplished in making himself worthy to be Jesus' disciple as well as his prophet. Well, we'll pick this up and continue it next time, but don't forget the two disciples.

Don't know their names, but we will someday. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the wonderful examples we have in scripture that so powerfully communicate to us your evaluation, your reward for faithfulness, for self-sacrifice, for dedication to the cause of Christ.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit will impress these things on our hearts in the days ahead and help us to fulfill their potential. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.