

John the Baptist Cast Into Prison

Matthew 4:12-17

We just finished the Sunday School lessons on the temptations of Jesus. Jesus was baptized and then he was tempted by Satan. After this, Jesus hears that **John the Baptist** was **cast into prison**. I want to focus in on this verse, Matthew 4 verse 12.

""Matthew 4:12

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;""

Why Was John the Baptist Cast Into Prison?

So, we don't get much detail about John the Baptist being cast into prison. What happened? John the Baptist was just preaching about Jesus. He just baptized Jesus. And now he's in prison.

For example, let's say you come here next Sunday and I'm not here. You ask Pam, "Where's Josh?" And she tells you that I was cast into prison. You would probably ask, "What did he do? Why is he in prison?"

You would probably assume I did something wrong if I'm in prison.

Maybe you think I attacked the guy who cussed me out the other day on Burton Avenue because I took his parking spot on the public street in front of his home for 15 minutes. Maybe you thought something else happened. But you would assume I did something wrong to be cast into prison.

The Biblical Account of John the Baptist's Imprisonment

So, what happened to John the Baptist? What did he do? Did he do wrong?

The Gospel of Matthew doesn't tell us, but let's search the Scriptures to see if the Bible tells us what happened to John. As we continue, I want you to keep one thing in mind.

""Luke 7:28

For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.""

Among men, there is not a greater than John the Baptist. We are Baptist. In God's eyes, there is greatness and there is not greatness. At this church, we will be great through God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

In your life, you need to be great and do great things.

Did John the Baptist Do Something Wrong?

John the Baptist was great. He did great things using the word of God. But he ended up in prison. Let's find out why.

When we search the Scriptures, we find seven chapters in the Bible that speak about John the Baptist being cast into prison. We're going to take a look at those Scriptures right now. What did John the Baptist do wrong?

""**Matthew 11:1-3**

And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. 2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, 3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?""

In Matthew Chapter 11, we see John the Baptist is in prison still. We saw he was cast into prison in Matthew Chapter 4. We're at Matthew Chapter 11 and John the Baptist is still in prison.

John the Baptist's Doubts While in Prison

We're learning more here, though. John the Baptist was a great man, but he was still just a man. He was still just like you and I.

While John was in prison, he was hearing about the works of Christ. John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus. The disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

John the Baptist was already doubting Jesus Christ.

This is important. You will have doubts in your life. The greatest prophet to ever live had doubts. You'll have doubts. We all lose faith at times. John the Baptist was going through tough times. He was in prison. That's tough times. And he was doubting Jesus Christ.

"Jesus, are you the one? Or do we look for someone else? Are you the Savior, Jesus, or not?"

We All Doubt Jesus Christ at Times Too

That's sin. John the Baptist was a sinner. He doubted Jesus Christ. That's not okay. That's not good. It's evil. We do evil at times. We are all sinners. I want to show you a Scripture I use during soul winning or the preaching of the Gospel.

""**2 Timothy 2:13**

If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself. ""

That's Paul writing to Timothy. Again, that's the Apostle Paul writing to his great friend in Jesus Christ Timothy. Both of these men were saved already. They have everlasting life. But Paul says, "If WE believe not." Is it possible for us to believe not at times in our life? Of course.

The disciples didn't believe when Jesus arose from the dead. They were down. They thought Jesus was the Messiah who was going to rule and reign right then and there. Once he died, they didn't believe he was the Messiah. He died. He even told them what would happen.

And yet, they didn't believe. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."

Hey, put your faith in Jesus alone. Trust him. Know what he can do. He's already shown you. He gave you the life you have right now. Don't ever doubt him. You might be in a situation in your life where you think there's no way out of this. This is impossible. This will never work out.

Don't Ever Doubt God Because He Can Do Anything

Hey, you aren't realizing who Jesus Christ happens to be. The Egyptians were after the Israelites. The Israelites were fleeing. They were weak. The Egyptians were strong. If you were there, you would have thought there's no way you're getting away alive.

But God stepped in. GOD STEPPED IN. When he steps in, anything can happen.

What you thought to be impossible is now simple and easy. We need to be more like the prophet Jeremiah.

""**Jeremiah 32:17**

Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:""

""**Jeremiah 32:27**

Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?""

Hey, there is nothing too hard for God. We're just in these bodies of flesh and sin. We can't do things. But God can. We have to realize how much higher he is than us. He can do anything. So, John the Baptist was doubting Jesus Christ. He was **in prison**. He was having tough times.

Jesus' Response to John the Baptist's Doubts

"Are you the Savior or not, Jesus?" Let's see how Jesus responds to John the Baptist while he's in prison.

""**Matthew 11:4-6**

Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: 5 The blind receive their sight, 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. 6 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.""

Hey, go show John the Baptist again. Sometimes we need reminders. That's why you come here to church. If John the Baptist needed a reminder, we need that too.

Hey, the blind receive their sight. The lame walk. The lepers are cleansed. The deaf hear.

Do you understand this? Don't doubt the Lord God Almighty. He created us out of the dust of the earth. We are complex creations. He created the eyes. He created the bones. He created the muscles. He spoke and it was done. He created the ears, the eyes, and the mouth.

God Speaks and Things Happen

If he says, "Blind man, see." Ther blind man will see. If he says, "Lame man, walk." The lame man walks. If he says, "Leper, be cleansed." The leper is cleansed. If he says, "Deaf man, hear." The deaf man hears.

The dead are raised up. Can God raise the dead? Yes he can. He's done it over and over and over again. He owns it all. He has it all. All power. All authority. He is God. The dead are raised up.

And most importantly. Make sure you hear this. Most importantly, right there at the end of verse 5, "And the poor have the Gospel preached to them." We're all poor here. And we'll be poor together. As the rich take more and more from the poor, we've got God. We don't need them. We don't need their riches.

Why?

Verse 6 says, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Don't be ashamed of Jesus Christ. Don't be offended in Jesus Christ. He is the Lord of all creation. Go tell John the Baptist that.

So, we still don't know why John the Baptist is in prison. Let's keep studying the Scriptures.

The Role of Herod and Herodias in John the Baptist's Fate

Now, this next set of Scriptures is going to tell us why John the Baptist is in prison. Let's take a close look. Please listen closely as you'll miss this.

""**Matthew 14:1-4**

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, 2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. 3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison

for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. 4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.""

""**Matthew 14:5-8**

And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. 6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. 7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. 8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.""

""**Matthew 14:9-12**

And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. 10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. 11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. 12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.""

The Execution of John the Baptist: What Led to His Death?

So, look, John the Baptist was put into prison but then he was taken from prison and put to death for the same reason.

Herod the tetrarch had taken John the Baptist and put him into prison for Herodias' sake. Herodias was Herod's sister in law. Herod had a brother named Philip who was married to Herodias. Herod then takes his brother's wife and she becomes his wife.

John the Baptist had told Herod that it was not lawful for him to have Herodias. Herod was afraid to put him to death and instead puts him in prison. He was afraid of the multitude. They loved John the Baptist. Herod was afraid of the multitude.

But then the daughter of Herodias danced before Herod at his birthday and pleased Herod. He promised her whatever she wanted. Her mom, Herodias, told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist in a charger.

The king was sorry for the promise or oath he made.

John the Baptist Reproved Herod for His Sin

But he did it anyway because keeping a promise or oath is more important. He beheaded John the Baptist. And why? Think about it. Why was John the Baptist in prison? John the Baptist told Herod he couldn't have his brother's wife.

""**Leviticus 18:16**

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness.""

""**Leviticus 20:21**

And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.""

God is serious about his laws. I wouldn't take my brother's wife and make her my own. That is my brother's wife. She's not mine. It is an unclean thing to do something like that. The punishment: "They shall be childless."

Herod did it anyway. John the Baptist told him he was wrong. Herod didn't like it. Herodias didn't like it. John was put into prison. John was executed.

Lessons From John the Baptist's Time in Prison

Why? For the simple fact that John the Baptist reproved him or told him he was wrong. And it's so crystal clear that Herod was wrong. Herodias was wrong. It's crystal clear. A man can't take his brother's wife to be his own wife. It's against God's law. So, be careful in your life. It's good to stand up for God and his words. But here's a warning.

""**Proverbs 9:7-8**

He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. 8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.""

Obviously, Herod the tetrarch and Herodias were scorners. They directly hated the commandment of God. They broke it willingly. John the Baptist reproved them and he was hated by them. If you try to correct a man and woman like Herod and Herodias, that's what you get. Prison and death by beheading.

How John the Baptist's Story Encourages Us Today

Herod was the tetrarch or the governor under Roman rule for that area. He had the power to put **John the Baptist in prison** and execute him. And he did.

For example, if you try to rebuke our current king, he could do the same thing somehow. He could come up with some story and you end up dead.

Listen, don't doubt God. Stand up against sin always.

But don't go looking for a fight. For example, if I went out to the top drug dealer in the area and I told him he was wrong. I don't even know who that is nor do I care to know. But let's say I did, and I showed him in the Bible where he was wrong. I called him out publicly for dealing drugs. I reproved him. I might end up dead.

How John the Baptist's Story Encourages Us Today

Be smart. Reproving wicked men doesn't help. They don't care. They want you dead.

Rebuke a wise man. That's why we come to church. We teach the Bible. You all want to hear the Bible. You are wise men and wise women. You aren't going to want to kill me for telling you the truth in the Bible.

What I tell you is good. Sometimes we might not like it, but we have to take it, get things fixed, and learn from it.

Now, on the other side, speaking of Herod. We know Herod was troubled within himself after he killed John the Baptist. He thought Jesus was John the Baptist coming back from the dead. He also mocked Jesus during his trial.

""Luke 23:11

And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.""

Think about this. The man who killed God's greatest prophet. The man who mocked Jesus Christ. What do you think happened to him? Not good. The Bible doesn't specifically tell us what happened. But we know.

Guaranteed bad ending for Herod. You don't want to be on the side against God and his people.

Let's pray.