

# “The Gospel’s Purity, Power, & Perplexity”

Matthew 11:1-6

April 26, 2026

**INTRO:** Do you have any biblical characters that you feel a special kinship to/with?

**Q:** *What’s the difference between you & John The Baptist?*

- Think about that... *really think about it.*
- The biblical/theological answer is important...

**A:** **Christ’s cross, His resurrection, & Pentecost!**

- JB was pre-cross, pre-risen, & pre-Spirit-filling
- JB was the last sent-one, Old Covenant Prophet
- We/<sup>church</sup> are New Covenant apostles & prophets

## PRAYER

### CONTEXT:

- Matthew’s Gospel on the Jesus Christ’s Gospel
- Ch.11 transitions Messiah & missionaries...
- **Engaging, Evaluating, & Exemplifying** (ch.11-13)
- Everything comes down to the “5 Great C’s”
  - The Christ; Cross; Commands; Commission; & Combat

### BIG IDEA:

It is impossible to over-state the importance of Christ, His cross, His grace, & His Gospel in each of our lives.

## PREVIEW:

- Divine (Koinonia) Discipleship (**PURITY**)
- Divine (Koinonia) Declaration (**POWER**)
- Divine (Koinonia) Doubting (**PERPLEXITY**)

## TEXT:

### Matthew 11:1-6

*1 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. 2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"*

## I. Divine (Koinonia) Discipleship [GOSPEL PURITY]

*1 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples,*

- **ALL** that Jesus has done with them... **EQUIPPING!**
- See now [John 20:21](#)
- See now [Matthew 11:1f - 28:18-20](#)

## II. Divine (Koinonia) Declaration [GOSPEL POWER]

*he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities. 2  
Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ,*

What are some of the clearest & most succinct expressions of truth in love within the Bible?

- *Jesus is Lord!* (Genesis 1:1 & John 1:1ff)
- *His name is Emmanuel – God with us!*
- John 3:3... *You must be born again.*
- *You are saved by grace thru faith, not works...*
- John 3:16 & 36
- *It is finished! & He is risen!*
- *Go make disciples...*
- *BE My witnesses...*

➤ Now, what are some of the most difficult biblical truths to hear, heed, & work thru?

- The **problem of evil**...
- The perfection of the Trinity...
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### THE PURITY, POWER, & PERPLEXITY OF THE GOSPEL

- Acts 10:43 gives Matthew 10:40ff clarity & context!

***“To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”***

**(Acts 10:43)**

- Ditto... *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.* - **Matthew 19:29**

- See the OT Prophets...
- See the NT prophets if Mt.11:1ff
- See all 4 Gospels...
- See all 12+ sent ones
- See Great Commission texts...
- See John 17's Trinitarian prayer
- See Jude, Timothy, Titus, etc.

“The Gospel has 2 guardrails  
(grace & faith),  
1 test (faithful-obedience),  
and countless stories...  
(with both, tragic & triumphant outcomes).

### III. Divine (Koinonia) Doubting [GOSPEL PERPLEXITY]

*he sent word by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"*

- 1 Corinthians 3:10-15
- Matthew 7:24-27
- **Biblical "bookends" / Guardrails / Tensions...**
  - God's grace & God's wrath
  - God's mercy & God's justice
  - God's forgiveness & God's holiness
  - God's heaven & God's hell
  - God's love & God's hate
  - God's sovereignty & evil's existence
  - The cross' love & The cross' hate
  - Our justification & sanctification
  - Our sanctification & glorification
  - Paul & Judas
  - David & Demas
  - Jesus & John the Baptist???
- Joe T. memorial message...

- Jacob He loved (disciplined) but Esau He hated (did not discipline)

- Beware the wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15)... AND the sheep in goats apparel... You don't want to embrace the deceitful wolf nor shame the embattled sheep. Truth in love is what they both need... and that's what every true & healthy sheep, sheep dog, & shepherd, as "koinonia-links," is called, commanded, & commissioned to declare, deliver, & distribute... locally, regionally, & globally - no matter what!
- Paul's Romans 7 ugly picture
- Why is JB's stumble included in the Bible? Ditto with Peter's denials, David's debauchery, Tom's doubting, Paul's Romans 7 confession???
- Now... why is Demas & his late defection... or Hebrews' confrontation of apostasy... or Judas & his devilish deception included in the Bible?
- \*\*\* "Koinonia connection/chain" from the literal "little ones" (least of these) to Almighty, triune God!
- \*\*\* Beware! There are many, tragically, who claim to value a biblical worldview, and thereby think that they are safe & saved. BUT... valuing a biblical worldview is NOT the same as victoriously (by grace thru faith) LOVING & LIVING out a biblical worldview.

\*\*\* Define, Describe, & Distinguish

- > Define
  - >> Content
  - >> Context
  - >> Core
- > Describe
  - >> Scriptural

- >> Satanic
- >> Stumble
- > Distinguish
  - € Defining vs Describing
  - € Start vs Finish
  - € Humble-stumble vs Biblical-unbelief
  - €€ Adam & Eve = severity

(Doubt is often the doorman for sinful disobedience!)

(Doubt is often the grease that lubricates the sinful machinery of man's demise.)

(Doubt is often the food that feeds the monster of sinful unbelief.)

(Doubt is like a loaded gun... it could be used to protect when facing dangerous perpetrators... OR... it could be dangerously aimed at & misapplied against true heralds, hero's & helpers!)

€€ Judas & Demas = tricky

€€ Family Giants = (ie. 10X)

- Naked Noah...
- Cowardice Abram...
- Messy Moses...
- Adulterous David...
- Jumpy JB... (here)
- Timid Timothy...

- Doubting Thomas...
- Denying (3X) Peter...
- Corrupt Cross-man...
- Romans 7's Polarized Paul...
  - >> Ephesians 2:1-10
  - >> The 5 Great C's
  - >> 1st Corinthians 3:10-15
  
- Our works = reflections of our witness... (be they transparent or disguises... they tell a story that God knows the truth about...)
  
- Our works (true or false, self serving or God glorifying, righteously motivated or wrongly motivated) ARE the fruit of our heart's deepest desires & worship.
  
- Our works, otherwise known as our "Hands," when honestly & biblically assessed, tell our Head & Heart's true story.
  - >> 1st John 1:1-3
  - >> 2nd Corinthians 5:17-21

Many believers today also doubt certain truths about God because of incomplete information, because they have inadequate knowledge or understanding of His Word. The Christian who is

immersed in Scripture has no reason to stumble.  
When God is allowed to speak through His Word,  
doubt vanishes like mist in the sunlight.

## **For now we see thru foggy glass...**

Humanly speaking the *career* of **John** the Baptist  
had ended in disaster. He had been the fiery,  
independent, dramatic, confrontational,  
courageous man who preached exactly what  
needed to be preached, to whom it needed to be  
preached, and when it needed to be preached. He  
was fearless, aggressive, and faithful to the Lord in  
every way. He called sin sin and sinners sinners. And  
now he was **in prison** because of his faithfulness. –  
Mac

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JESUS RESPONDED TO THE DOUBTS OF THE TWO DISCIPLES ON THE EMMAUS ROAD BY FIRST REBUKING THEM FOR BEING “SLOW OF HEART TO BELIEVE IN ALL THAT THE PROPHETS HAVE SPOKEN.” THEN, “BEGINNING WITH MOSES AND WITH ALL THE PROPHETS, HE EXPLAINED TO THEM THE THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF IN ALL THE SCRIPTURE” (LUKE 24:25, 27).

*He had repeatedly told them about the nature of His mission and plan, but the ideas they had formed from the world around them clouded and distorted their understanding.*

The people’s ideas about the Messiah were so distorted and ingrained that they disregarded or misconstrued whatever Jesus said or did that did not fit those ideas. When some of the Jewish leaders said to Jesus, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly,” Jesus answered, “I told you, and you do not believe” (John 10:24–25).

People today, including some believers, are confused and perplexed about the plan of God for the same reason. Their minds are so full of the ideas of people around them that they fail to understand God's plan even when they read it in Scripture. We continually hear people ask, "If Christ loves everybody so much, why do children die and people starve and get diseased and become crippled? If God is a God of justice, why is there so much corruption and injustice in the world? Why do so many good people have it so bad and so many bad people have it so good? If God is so loving and merciful, why does He send people to hell? If God is so powerful and false religions are so evil, why doesn't He just wipe out those false systems?" Because the Lord does not fit their preconceived ideas of what He should be like, people are perplexed, often indignant, and sometimes even blasphemous.

*The world does not know God or understand His nature or His plan. "A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Cor. 2:14). The Jews who would not believe Jesus' claim to messiahship even when He told them plainly of it, did so because they did not belong to Him. "You do not believe," Jesus said, "because you are not of My sheep" (John 10:26).*

Ignorance and unbelief always blind the eyes of men to the realities of the kingdom that are all around them.

- **1 Corinthians 3:10-15...** the question in focus here is: What Foundation are you building on? And second, how did you (or didn't you) contribute to building up the kingdom of God?!?

**REVIEW:**

- We need a biblical, missional, & personal assessment, understanding, & application of both doubt & faithful obedience
- There's TENSION in the Gospel's "truth in love"
- See Romans 6,7,8...
- Doubt is the negative questioning of something positive...
- Doubt, like so many other aspects of life, is ultimately defined by its context, motive, & fruit.
- Doubt could be used as a divine & preliminary, corrective, wake-up call to get us back on course...
- Or doubt could be (and often is) a devilish or demonically inspired poison that feeds & fuels one's pride-filled, self-righteous, & self absorbed will to deny & defy God & His Word, will, & way.

- When doubt describes us... (we're stumbling)
- When doubt defines us... (we're lost)
- Doubt is the temptation of faith...
- Doubt can be a test of faith...
- Contrast the 2 home builders in Matthew 7:24-27!
- Contrast Matthew 7:21-23 with the thief on the cross!

## CLOSE:

- Sweeping dead-heart-sins under the preverbal rug never makes them go away... it just hides them from some people... but God knows where the bodies are buried!
- Time does NOT ultimately “heal all wounds...” BUT it does eventually reveal all truth... and lies!
- **Proverbs 24:16!!!** = a righteous man falls 7X (means he stands & gets up again over & over) BUT, by contrast, the wicked fall (once) into destruction!

*For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, But the wicked stumble into evil/in time of calamity.*

- Thief on the cross... “The Man on the middle cross said I could come!”

Jesus, His early Christians, & His eternal Church never did & never will pass the irreligious, hyper-religious, and/or lukewarm religious tests... because, they use a partially biblical, which is by definition an unbiblical... blueprint to build & tear down with...

- Lordless Christs & Saviors are heretical lies.
- ANY cross-less christianity is a heretical lie.
- Non-cross-carrying Christians are heretical lies.

### **What does John the Baptist teach us...**

- The Holy Spirit's truth, proof, love, & power
- The counter-culturalism of Christ-likeness.
- The 2 types of aroma Christ offers...
- The imperfection of Christ-followers...
- The drowning depths & death of doubt when disciples drift.
- The "no matter what" promise & blessing of The Gospel
- The eternal security of Christians!

# **PRAYER**

**Worship:**

*"Hard Fought Hallelujah"*

## Study Material:

### Matthew 11:1-

#### **John's Questions**

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.

<sup>2</sup>Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup>and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"

<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup>*the* BLIND RECEIVE 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. <sup>6</sup>"And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

## MacArthur Commentary:

### **Overcoming Doubt**

(11:1–6)

*And it came about that when Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. Now when John in prison heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples, and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me."* (11:1–6)

**The first ten chapters of Matthew are, in general, a series of testimonies that prove who Jesus is.**

1. *He presents the testimony of history (1:1–17),*
2. *of the miraculous birth (1:18–25),*
3. *of fulfilled prophecy (2:1–23),*
4. *of Christ's forerunner (3:1–12),*
5. *of God the Father (3:13–17),*
6. *of Jesus' power (4:1–11),*
7. *of His words (5:1–7:29),*
8. *of His works (8:1–9:38),*
9. *and of His disciples (10:1–42).*

Matthew marshals all of that evidence in the courtroom, as it were, to testify that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah and Son of God.

**IN CHAPTERS 11–12**  
**MATTHEW FOCUSES ON THE**  
**REACTIONS OF VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS**  
**AND GROUPS TO THAT EVIDENCE,**  
**ORGANIZED INTO SEVERAL GENERAL**  
**CATEGORIES OF RESPONSE.**

*In each chapter there is a series of negative responses followed by a positive appeal.*

## Chapter 11 looks at the negative responses:

1. of doubt (vv. 1–15),
2. criticism (16–19), and
3. indifference (20–24),
4. followed by a positive appeal to faith (25–30).

## Chapter 12 looks at the negative responses:

1. of rejection (vv. 1–21),
2. amazement (22–23),
3. blasphemy (24–27), and
4. curious fascination (38–45),
5. followed by another positive appeal to faith (46–50).

In the opening six verses of this section, Matthew first mentions Jesus' brief tour of ministering alone (v. 1; see 10:5) and then presents John's negative response of doubt (vv. 2–3) and Jesus' response to that doubt (vv. 4–6).

## JESUS MINISTERS ALONE

*And it came about that when Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. (11:1)*

Although the text does not say so explicitly, it can be assumed that, after **Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples**, they went out preaching and healing among the Jews of Galilee as He had told them to do (see 10:5). While they were gone, **Jesus departed**

from there (the place of instruction; see 10:1) and began Himself **to teach and preach in their cities**, that is, the cities of Galilee.

## **FOR A RELATIVELY BRIEF PERIOD OF TIME JESUS MINISTERED ALONE WHILE THE DISCIPLES WERE OUT ON THEIR FIRST MISSION.**

His twofold ministry was **to teach** and to **preach**, to explain and to proclaim the good news.

Most of His teaching would have been done in the streets of the cities, but since the synagogues were the normal place where Scripture was taught among the Jews, some of His teaching was probably done there as well.

The Jewish historian Philo reports that the main purpose of synagogue services was to read and expound Scripture. Visiting rabbis and scholars were always welcome to teach in the local synagogues, and Jesus availed Himself of that privilege many times (see Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 12:9; Mark 6:2; Luke 6:6; John 18:20).

## **JOHN DOUBTS JESUS**

***Now when John in prison heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples, and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?”***

(11:2–3)

In the case of John the Baptist, and of countless believers since his time, doubt might better be described as perplexity or confusion. The perplexity dealt with in these verses is the perplexity of a believer, a true child of God and citizen of His kingdom. John was not questioning the truthfulness of God’s Word as revealed in the Old Testament or as revealed to him at the baptism of Jesus. He was rather uncertain about his understanding of those truths.

**VIRTUALLY ALL THE GOSPEL REFERENCES TO DOUBT PERTAIN TO BELIEVERS RATHER THAN TO UNBELIEVERS; AND THE KIND OF QUESTIONING JOHN THE BAPTIST EXPERIENCED CONCERNING JESUS’ IDENTITY CAN ONLY OCCUR IN THE LIFE OF A BELIEVER.**

In that transitional time, before the written revelation of the New Testament, there were many things that seemed unclear and needed explanation and confirmation.

**Jesus Himself testified of John that** *“among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist”* (Matt. 11:11).

He was the greatest man who had lived until his time, and, when they are confused,

**all believers can take comfort in his perplexity.**

It is also encouraging to remember that it was to His true disciples, primarily the twelve, that Jesus repeatedly said such words as ***“O you of little faith”*** and

***“How long will you doubt?”*** (Matt. 8:26; 14:31; 21:21; cf. 28:17; Mark 11:23; 16:11; Luke 12:28).

**Though the Lord understands the doubts of His children, He is never pleased with their doubt, because it reflects against Him.**

While Peter was pondering the vision of the unclean animals, the messengers from Cornelius arrived at the house where he was staying, and the Holy Spirit said to Peter, “Behold, three men are looking for you. But arise, go downstairs, and accompany them without misgivings,” that is, without doubt (Acts 10:19–20). **James warns believers that “the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind”** (James 1:6; cf. Eph. 4:14). But the doubt of which John the Baptist was guilty was the result of weakness rather than sin.

By the time Jesus began this time of ministering alone in Galilee, **John** the Baptist had been put in **prison** by Herod for denouncing the king’s adulterous marriage to his brother’s wife (Matt. 14:3–4).

John had already announced Jesus’ coming as the Messiah, addressed Him as the Lamb of God, baptized Him in the Jordan River, and declared in humility that “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). He had already acknowledged Jesus as the Christ and trusted Him as his own Lord

and Savior. Yet he was now perplexed,  
*and he sent word by his disciples, and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"*

The fact that John sent his disciples to Jesus is a strong testimony to his faith. In his heart he believed that Jesus truly was the Messiah and trusted Him as his Lord; but the events or lack of them caused his mind or emotions to put a cloud of doubt over his assurance.

He was saying, in effect, "I have firmly believed You are the Messiah; but have I been wrong?" He was not asking for information but for confirmation.

*He believed,  
but his faith had become weakened.*

John came to Jesus through his disciples, saying, **like the father of the boy Jesus cleansed of an evil spirit, "I do believe; help my unbelief"** (Mark 9:24).

A number of John's disciples had already been observing Jesus for some time, probably on John's instruction. Shortly after the banquet Matthew gave in honor of Jesus and to which he invited fellow "tax-gatherers and sinners," the "disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?' " (Matt. 9:10, 14). And after Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain, "the disciples of John reported to him about all these things" (Luke 7:18).

Obviously John's disciples had some access to him while he was in prison, and apparently he sent them out on various assignments, primarily to observe and report on Jesus' ministry. After being imprisoned for many months, unable to preach or to have any contact with the outside world except for occasional visits by his disciples, **John was plagued with**

## misgivings and doubts about Jesus—the One he had announced, baptized, and declared to be the Christ.

He therefore told two of his disciples (see Luke 7:19) to ask Jesus specifically, **Are You the Expected One?** Along with the Branch, Son of David, King of kings, and other such titles, **the Expected One** (*ho erchomenos*) was a common designation for the Messiah. The title is first found in Psalms 40:7 and 118:26 and is frequently used or alluded to by the gospel writers (see Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:7; 11:9; Luke 3:16; 13:35; 19:38; John 1:27).

Every Jew of Jesus' day would have known that to ask if He were **the Expected One** was to ask if He were the Messiah.

*It should be reassuring to us that even a man of John's spiritual stature and gifts was subject to doubt.*