

An Embarrassing Situation

As we turn to Luke 7:12, we see a funeral procession wending its way out of the City of Nain.

It was a particularly sorrowful occasion, as the deceased was the only son of a poor widow.

And not only was she sorrowing, but she was desperate.

You see, with the last male member of the household gone, there would be little, if any, means of financial support.

And not only that but, their family name would be extinguished in Israel.

But her grief would be short-lived, and her mourning would be turned into joy.

V 14-15 tells us Jesus **“---came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, ‘Young man,**

I say to you, arise.' So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother."

Certainly this miracle had been motivated by compassion, but it had another very spectacular affect.

V 16 says **"---fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us'; and, 'God has visited His people.'** And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region."

Yes, this miracle had the people *talking*, and at a time when Jesus was just about to begin an extensive campaign of teaching and preaching in their cities. And not surprisingly, John's disciples told their leader, who was now languishing in prison, about this marvellous event.

I'm sure they thought it would lift his spirits, but, surprisingly, it didn't seem to have that affect.

The truth was, John was having serious *doubts* about his whole ministry.

If his second cousin really was the Messiah, then why was he cooling his heels in prison?

Why wasn't he out there pointing the nation to God's Servant?

Yes, he needed answers, and he needed them *now*.

V 19 **"And John, calling two of his disciples to *him*, sent *them* to Jesus, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'"**

Now I'm sure if we found ourselves in similar circumstances, we would have been devastated.

After all, John was the man who had mobilized *the entire nation* to get ready for their Messiah.

Remember his words in John 1:15-18 **"This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*."**

And the response had been *overwhelming!*

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And now, in front of a crowd of very enthusiastic supporters, he was asking Jesus whether He really was the Messiah. Now I'm sure none of us would ever think of criticizing John.

We're much too aware of the devastating effects of tribulation in our own lives, aren't we?

However, John's inquiry had come at the worst possible time, and under the worst possible circumstances.

In fact, the only *positive* thing I can see about this entire situation is that it gives us an opportunity to observe Jesus' reaction.

And one of the first things we notice is that He wasn't upset with John.

Yes, without a word of rebuke, He began ministering to the needs of the people.

Luke 7: 21 **"And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight."**

And then, **"Jesus answered and said to them,** (that is, to John's disciples) **"Go and**

tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind *see*, the lame *walk*, the lepers are *cleansed*, the deaf *hear*, the dead are *raised*, the poor have the gospel *preached* to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

Yes, even under these devastating circumstances, this was the only answer Jesus could give him.

Certainly there were other witnesses to His Messiahship.

In John 5:33 to 40, Jesus had pointed out four in total, to the religious leaders. And ironically, John the Baptist was the *first* one He mentioned.

Added to John's testimony, there was His mighty works, God's personal testimony from heaven, and the Holy Scriptures that He had fulfilled to the letter.

But during His public ministry, it was His *mighty works* that were a special *sign* to Israel.

They should have been enough to convert the nation, and they would have to be enough to convince John.

No, John didn't need more *proof*.

Just like ourselves, when we are consumed by doubts, John only needed to believe what he already knew.

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And then, as we continue to observe Jesus' reaction, we are impressed by the fact that He wasn't scrambling to save His own reputation.

No, it was *John's* reputation that He was concerned about.

And He immediately set about to repair it.

Luke 7:24-25 **"When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the**

multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts."

And then, when they were on the tiptoe of expectancy, He presented John's credentials

V 27 **"This is he of whom it is written:**

'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You."

I'm sure many in the crowd recognized His reference to Malachi 3:1, where it says--
--**"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me."**

And even though Jesus didn't mention it at this particular time, we can find John's job description in Isaiah 40:3.

Yes, he was to **"Prepare the way of the LORD,"** and he was to **"Make straight in the desert a highway for our God."**

And he had certainly fulfilled that mission.

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And then, having identified his mission, Jesus identified His *man*.

Luke 7:28 **"For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."**

And so, even under these rather embarrassing circumstances, Jesus continued to appreciate the true value of His servant, and to proclaim it publicly---**"there is**

not a greater prophet than John the Baptist."

Yes, He was a friend in need . . . which is a friend indeed.

And Jesus is *our* friend, even when we become the fly in the ointment.

No, **"---we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."** Hebrews 4:16