

28 June 2026 – When Doubt Floods Your Heart

Introduction

The art of doubting is easy, for it is an ability that is born with us.
Unknown; Martin Luther (Founder of the German Reformation)

No alcoholic was ever more in bondage to his habit of drink than many Christians are to their habit of doubting. In fact, many Christians have settled down under their doubts as though they had contracted an incurable disease.
Billy Graham

There are times in life when one is faced with a major trial, a major hurt. It's in those times you are confronted with two options.

1. You can begin to doubt God and His word, that may lead you to a place of sinning and abandoning God.
2. You can choose to trust God, trust His character even if you do not fully understand the why or understand how this forms a part of God's plan.

Historical Background

The background to our passage is that Matthew had set out to prove that Jesus is the Messiah.

Matthew had proven that the Messiah:

- Matthew 1:1-17 came from royal stock
 - Matthew 1:18-25 was conceived in a virgin by the power of the HS
 - Mat 2:1-23 came in fulfillment to prophesy
 - Matthew revealed
 - Matthew 3:1-12 John prepared the way for the coming Messiah
 - Matthew 3:13-17 God the Father and God the HS confirmed the Messiah as the Son of God.
 - Matthew 4:1-11 the Messiah overcame Satan's attempts to tempt him, proving His moral and ethical character
 - Matthew 4:13-17 the Messiah moved to a strategic location to make disciples
 - Matthew 4:18 -25 the Messiah called his people to follow Him make other disciples
 - Matthew 5-7 The messiah provides the moral, ethical and spiritual guidelines that should govern the disciple's life.
 - Matthew 8-9 a series of miracles authenticate Jesus as the true Messiah
 - Matthew 10 instructions the messiah gave his disciples for their mission trip to the Jews.
 - Matthew 11-12 Matthew brings all the evidence into a courtroom, testifying that Jesus is the Messianic King, the son of God and then revealed how people reacted while appealing to them to believe.
- ▶ Matthew 11:1-15 some doubted
 - ▶ Matthew 11:16-19 Some criticized
 - ▶ Matthew 11:20-24 some were indifferent

- ▶ Matthew 11:25-30 then to some came the appeal for faith
- ▶ Matthew 12:1-21 some wanted to kill him
- ▶ Matthew 12:22-23 some were astounded
- ▶ Matthew 12:24-27 Some blasphemed
- ▶ Matthew 12:38-45 Some wanted more signs
- ▶ Matthew 12:46-50 Then again came the appeal to faith

So read with me the passage this morning.

Passage

Matthew 11:1–6 LSB

Now it happened 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 One who is to come, 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, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.

Proposition

3 Steps to confront a doubting heart

1. Look at Jesus vs 1
2. Ask Jesus vs 2-3
3. Evaluate what He says. vs 4-6

1. Look at Jesus vs 1

Matthew 11:1 LSB

Now it happened that when Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.

1 Now it happened that when Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples,

Vs 1 serves to conclude chap 10's instructions to the twelve apostles.

It then introducing a new section describing John, the Galileans and the Pharisees response to Jesus.

The term **finished** = telos=Root complete, finish, Lemma = goal, BDAG = to complete an activity or process, completed

Jesus had completed instructions/ orders.

The term instructions = diatasso = dia =Through + tasso=appoint, order Root= order, give orders, direct Lemma= Bakers = command, or direct someone with specific instructions or tasks to be done, Bedag =give detailed instructions as to what must be done, order.

Vines= arrange, appoint, prescribe

The apostles had received their orders.

They then departed from Christ on their short-term Mission to the lost sheep of Israel as instructed in Matthew 10:5-6

Meantime what did Jesus do.

He did not put His feet up and relax, saying that's it, the mission to Israel is covered.

I gave them all the instructions they needed.

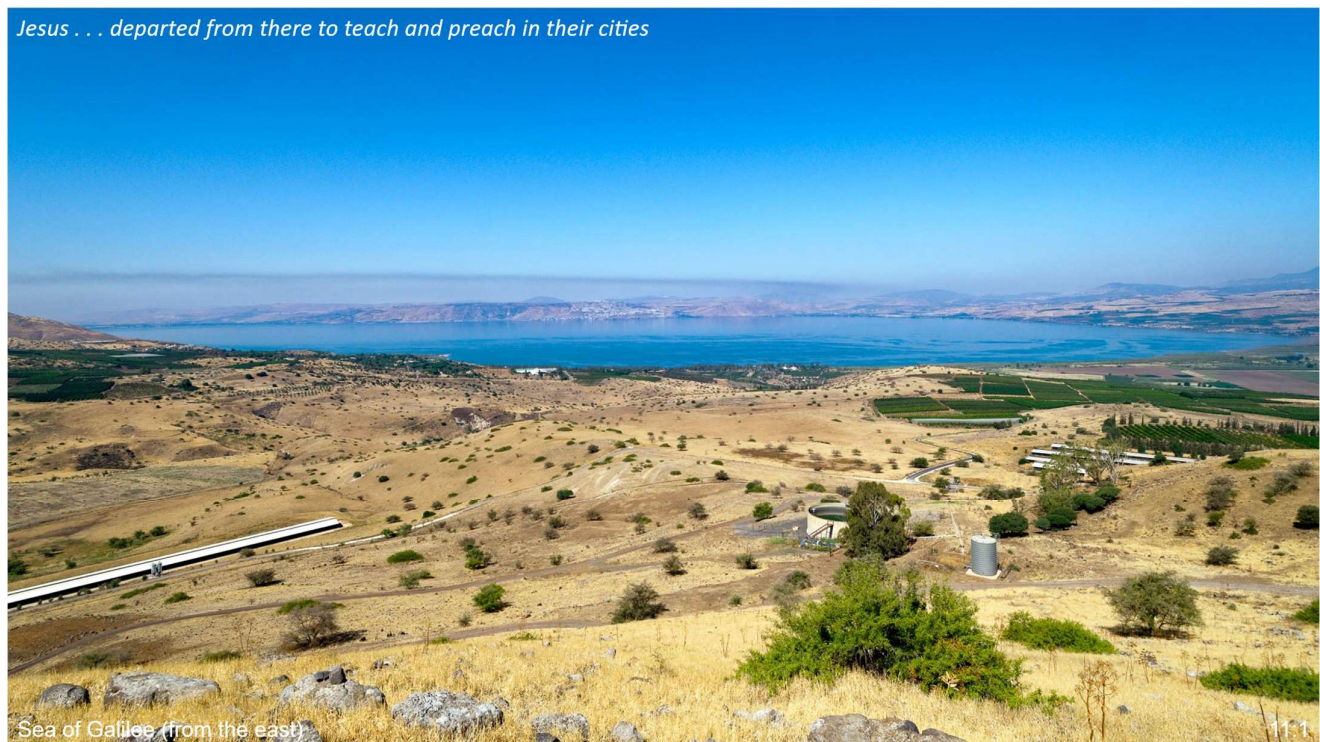
No

He sets an example.

He was not an absent leader.

He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.

2 slides



slides 1 sea of galilee from the east

Jesus . . . departed from there to teach and preach in their cities



Hills of Galilee (from the south)

11:1

slide 2 hills of galilee- ancient sight of the hometown of Jonah

Mark tells us what the disciples did.

Mark 6:12–13 LSB

*And they went out and preached that men should repent.
And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick
people and healing them.*

While Matthew reveals what Jesus did.

He went and

He taught =didasko=which means providing formal and informal instructions or teachings.

Likely as the itinerant Jewish Rabbi visited the local synagogues and taught.

The Jewish historian Philo stated that the main purpose for synagogues was to read and expound the Scriptures. Visiting Rabbis were always welcome to teach in the local synagogues and this was what Jesus did.

He not only taught but also preached

He also preached =kerysso = root proclaimed Lemma= preach, proclaim,
announced openly and publicly.

The content of His proclamation was the same message he had given His disciple.

Matthew 10:7 LSB

And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

It was a call to repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand, the same message John the Baptist preached (Matthew 3:2) the same message Jesus preached (Matthew 4:17).

Since the Messianic King had arrived, the long anticipated earthly Davidic kingdom had drawn near.

Accept the King and you accept His kingdom but reject that king and you reject His kingdom.

It's likely that Jesus did miracles then, but we are not told in Scripture about it yet.

Jesus also did what He instructed his disciples to do.

His life as a disciple of God the Father was consistent with his expectations for his disciples.

He lived in integrity.

Christ's life serves to authenticate and remove doubt about Jesus being the Messiah.

Application

Where do you find answers to a doubting heart.

You look at Jesus.

You ask yourself some questions?

Did Jesus live out what He instructed His disciples to do?

Did He walk His talk?

Did He set an example?

Was He a hypocrite or a man of integrity?

But a doubting heart needs more than knowing Jesus is authentic.

So, you come to Jesus with your heart concerns.

2. Ask Jesus vs 2-3

Matthew 11:2–3 LSB

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

2 ...Now when John in prison

When John heard in prison about the deeds of the Messiah . . .



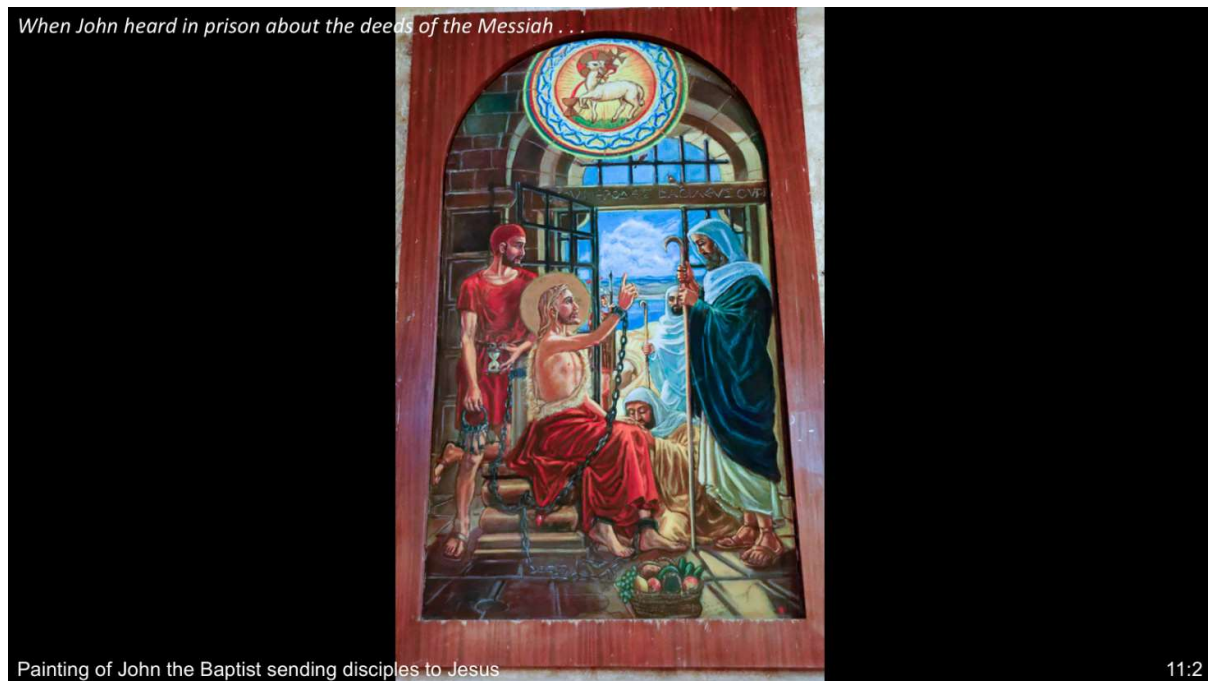
Macherus, fortress of Herod and traditional prison of John the Baptist (from the southeast)

112

slide: Macherus fortress, traditional prison of John.



slide 2 Macherus cave that tradition has as John's prison



slide 3 painting of John sending his disciples in the shrine of beheading of John in Medeba Jordan

John was in prison because he had confronted Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee. Herod had seduced his brother's wife and married her. John reproved him publicly for all his wicked actions.

Luke 3:19–20 LSB

But when Herod the tetrarch was reproved by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done,

Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

Josephus writes that Herod locked him up in a dungeon in Fort Machaerus.
This is a Jewish fortress, east of the Dead sea.
Matthew provides more information on the arrest.

Matthew 14:3–5 LSB

*For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison
because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip.*

*For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."
And although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd,
because they were regarding John as a prophet.*

John had been living in the wilderness, and yet now he was isolated in a dungeon.
He was in prison likely more than a year, during the time of Jesus's extensive ministry in Galilea

heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples

While in prison he also heard of the works of Christ.

His disciples most likely had heard the reports of the many miracles Jesus had done.

The term works = ergon = root = work, deed, =Lemma =Bedag = deed, accomplishments.

The grammar reveals this was a completed event.

Matthew is highlighting an important truth.

John had heard about the works, the deeds (the miracles, maybe the healings) of Christ.

They were the works of the Messiah.

Works or deeds that proved Jesus is the Messiah.

As we look at the life of John we know

John represents the best of Israel.

Isaiah had predicted that there would be a voice calling from the wilderness and this was John.

Isaiah 40:3 LSB

*A voice is calling, "Prepare the way for Yahweh in the wilderness; Make smooth in
the desert a highway for our God.*

John had been a man accustomed to living in the wild.

Luke 1:80 LSB

*And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in
the desolate regions until the day of his public appearance to Israel.*

Matthew 3:4 LSB

*Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his
waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.*

He was the forerunner to the Messiah.

His message

Matthew 3:2 LSB
Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

He said this about Jesus

John 1:26–30 LSB
John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but among you stands One whom you do not know.
This One is He who comes after me, of whom I am not worthy to untie the strap of His sandal.
These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.
On the next day, he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
“This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who has been ahead of me, for He existed before me.’

The messiah would:

- far greater than himself
- take away the sins of the world
- be eternal

When He baptized Jesus, we read.

He witnessed God the HS descending upon Jesus and heard God the Father declaring that Jesus is his beloved Son.

For about 18 months John ministered in the wilderness, living off the land, living under the heavenly skies.

But now

He was in prison

Confined, underground in a dungeon.

Isolated

Yet even though he was serving God by preparing the way for the Messiah,

John was struggling with something in his **heart**.

So, he sent a message through some of his disciples to Christ.

3 and said to Him,

Luke provides more information.

Luke 7:18–20 LSB
And the disciples of John reported to him about all these things.
Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are You the One who is to come, or should we look for someone else?”
When the men came to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, ‘Are You the One who is to come, or should we look for someone else?’

Luke reveals it was two of John's disciples

“Are You the One who is to come,

A direct translation from the Greek would read
you are the coming one.

or you are the arriving one

This would have been code for the Messiah

Had John used the term “The Messiah” it may have been difficult for Jesus to send an answer
without revealing his identity earlier than He wanted to-do.

Most translations translate this as a question.

But the next question reveals a problem for John

or shall we look for someone else?

Because of the grammar you could translate it as

Or might we await another.

Or might we wait for someone else

someone else (heteros=root =other, another= Bedag = being distinct from some other,
other, Sense = not the same, not of the same kind)

or might we look for another kind of messiah.

John was saying in effect, I firmly believed you are the Messiah, or should I look for
another kind, another.

Have I been wrong?

John seemed to be in the midst of his trial asking for confirmation.

Was John struggling with doubt?

Was he like the man who stated.

Mark 9:24 LSB

Immediately the boy's father cried out and was saying, "I do believe; help my unbelief."

What is doubt?

The Quick-Reference Guide to Counseling Teenagers 2 Definitions and Key Thoughts

Doubt is a fundamental distrust, fear, or lack of confidence in personal belief.

James calls doubters double minded people (James 1:5-8)

Doubt reveals an uncertain heart.

A heart asking for proof.

Doubt leads to a questioning heart.

Doubt can be self-centered faithlessness.

Doubt may be the result of ignorance

A gap maybe between understanding God's character and God's actions

How a good, just and powerful God can allow bad things to happen.

The Psalmist expressed his personal doubts and confusion in Psalm 73, when he
understood God's goodness yet saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Only after asking God and entering God's sanctuary did he see the wickedness, and it firmed up his doubting heart.

Even though his heart was embittered, brutish, ignorant, yet he found solace from God.

Psalm 73:21–26 LSB

*When my heart was embittered And I was pierced within,
Then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like an animal before You.
Nevertheless, I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand.
With Your counsel You will lead me And afterward take me in glory.
Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
My flesh and my heart fail, But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever.*

Now back to our passage

Why would John of all people be struggling with doubt?

I thought you knew Jesus was the Messiah.

What Matthew seemed to highlight with this was the misconception John and by extension Israel had concerning the Messiah.

They did not grasp the program and plan for the Messiah.

His unmet expectations of the Messiah had led to doubt forming in his heart.

Having heard of the works of the Messiah, they seemed to validate that He is the Messiah.

But there were some unmet expectations for the Messiah's program.

Jesus had not

- asserted His authority
- judged the people as John thought he would.

Matthew 3:10–12 LSB

And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

If Jesus was the Divine Messianic king, where:

- is the fire, the judgment of the oppressors and the wicked
- is his winnowing fork
- is him gathering up the chaff, the wicked and burning them.

Why are the Romans still oppressed?

Why after more than a year is Jesus not sitting on David's throne ruling over His kingdom

why has he not eliminated all the suffering, all the diseases, the afflictions, the hunger and pain

Why is he John still suffering in prison

One whole year had passed

On year stuck in a hole.

And even after Jesus had done many great deeds people, His people were still suffering.

His heart was plagued by

- His difficulties, trying circumstance- he was suffering.
- by not understanding God's thoughts, plans and program for the Messiah.
- all those unmet expectations and desires.
- a gap in his theology concerning a Messiah 1st and 2nd coming, Messiah as Savior and a Messiah as King, a messiah as a sin deliverer vs a Messiah as a political deliverer.

If the Messiah is all powerful, good (He is healing the sick and raising the dead) and he is the Messianic king and judge, why is He not on the throne and John in a dungeon. He needed confirmation from Jesus to confront his own struggling heart.

Application

How often does your heart form doubts when you face severe trials?

When you lose a loved one, or some severe sickness hits you, one is easily tempted to ask God, where were you when I needed you?

Or why have you allowed this to happen to me?

If you keep on milling this kind of thinking, one can easily transition to not trusting God. Those are very vulnerable times.

How often do you begin to doubt God's is either not good, or not sovereign meaning powerful enough to control matters.

But God operates on His own time schedule.

Acts 1:6–7 LSB

So, when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

But He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has set by His own authority;

God knows when He performs his plans.

This does not in any way distract him from his own character.

He remains good, wise, loving, caring and the perfect judge, and sovereign over all matters of life.

When doubts plague your heart:

Recognize your doubting.

Ask some honest questions to your heart.

What am I doubting?

Why am I doubting?

maybe even write down your doubting thoughts.

Then contact Jesus.

You pray

You share with Him the doubts in your heart.

You ask Him to comfort you, encourage you and address your doubting heart.

Open the Bible and read.

You pay attention to what you read and learn about who this God is that you are serving.

Compare God's words with your thoughts.

Choose to trust God and His word not your feelings and emotions.

You remind your heart of who this God is that you are serving

And then you respond in praise and worship.

We see this pattern even in the Psalmist as he had counseled his heart and it led to him exalting and praising God. (Psalm 37 & Psalm 73)

The final step we see in addressing a doubting heart is to listen to Jesus's words through the Scriptures, evaluate carefully and allow God's word to restore your soul.

Psalm 19:7 LSB

*the law of Yahweh is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of Yahweh is sure,
making wise the simple.*

The third key to overcoming doubt is to realize that God actually will answer through His word and through his people.

Pay attention to what He communicates.

3. Evaluate what He says. vs 4-6

Matthew 11:4–6 LSB

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, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.

4... And Jesus answered and said to them,

Jesus gave an answer.

He gave a response that would encourage John's doubting heart.

He did not just answer with a yes or a no.

He did not state that He is the Messiah.

These would not satisfy John.

Jesus commands John's disciples to rapport what they had seen.

Luke adds extra information.

Luke 7:20–22 LSB

When the men came to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the One who is to come, or should we look for someone else?'"

***At that very time** He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits, and He granted sight to many who were blind.*

And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them.

At that very moment in front of their eyes Jesus performed miraculous healings, drove out demons and gave sight to the blind.

He commanded them

Go and report to John what you hear and see:

Jesus did not relieve John's suffering.

Jesus did not have John taken out of the dungeon.

Johns' situation did not improve.

In fact, the bible reveals that soon John was soon after this beheaded.

But Jesus did give John special confirmation.

Confirmation he would carry with him even to his own martyrdom.

He reminded Him of a number of prophetic predicted signs that would accompany the Messiah.

5 the blind receive sight

The prophet Isaiah predicted this of the Messiah

Isaiah 29:18 LSB

On that day the deaf will hear words of a book, And out of darkness and thick darkness the eyes of the blind will see.

Isaiah 35:5 LSB

*Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,
But in the near context Isaiah also predicted that God would come with vengeance.*

Isaiah 35:4 LSB

Say to those with an anxious heart, "Be strong, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you.

and the lame walk,

Isaiah 35:6 LSB

Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah.

the lepers are cleansed

The lepers are cleansed



Group of lepers

11:5

slide group of lepers near the Hansen hospital in Jerusalem 1900

Jews understood that a leper cleansed was a recognized Messianic sign

A Rabbi Joshua Ben Levi stated that the sign for recognizing the Messiah was the following.

When will the Messiah come?" "Go and ask him for yourself," was his reply. "Where is he sitting?" "At the entrance." "And by what sign may I recognize him?" "He is sitting among the poor lepers: all of them untie their bandages all at once, and rebandage them together, whereas he unties and rebandages each separately, before treating the next ... The rabbis said: His name is "the leper scholar," as it is written, Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted (Tractate Sanhedrin 98a + b). (Barney Kasdan9Mathew presents Yeshuah, king Messiah: a Messianic commentary)

The Talmudic rabbis attributed Is 53 to the Messiah.

They believed that when the Messiah came, he would have a healing ministry, that would include unique miracles especially among lepers.

So, telling John about him cleansing lepers would serve as a further testimony that he was indeed the Messiah.

and the deaf hear,

Isaiah Pointed out that with the presence of Yahweh

Isaiah 29:18 LSB
On that day the deaf will hear words from a book, ...

Isaiah 35:5 LSB
....., And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

the dead are raised up,

He also

Isaiah 26:19 LSB
Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

But again, we see in the near context we see a God who will bring about justice.

Isaiah 26:20–21 LSB
Come, my people, enter into your rooms And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while Until indignation passes by.
For behold, Yahweh is about to come out from His place To visit the iniquity of the inhabitants of the earth; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed And will no longer cover those of hers who were killed.

and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Isaiah 61:1–2 LSB
The Spirit of Lord Yahweh is upon me Because Yahweh has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim release to captives And freedom to prisoners,
To proclaim the favorable year of Yahweh And the day of vengeance of our God, To comfort all who mourn,

But note that with the prediction of good news being proclaimed so is the prediction of God's **vengeance**.

The prophets had predicted both a healing Messiah, and a judging Messiah. In essence, Its true.

But just because part of the Prophecies had been fulfilled, it does not mean that the other part will not be fulfilled.

Don't let the fact that there still remain unfulfilled prophecies cause you to doubt.

Rather, see it as the fulfilled prophecies serve to prove that the unfulfilled prophecies will definitely take place in the future.

The Last line serves as encouragement and a light rebuke to John.

6... And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.

The term Blessed = makarios = root = blessed, happy= Lemma Bedag =favored, blessed, fortunate, happy privileged

The Grammar reveals that this person is continuously blessed.
Who is that person?

Including the grammar implies

The one who might not be caused to take offence on account of Me (Jesus)

The term take offense =skandalizo= root cause to sin =Lemma Bedag be led into sin, be repelled by someone of Jesus, SENSE = to be filled with disgust, revulsion for someone, conceived of as stumbling.

The happy person is the person who might not be let to sin because of Jesus.

The Blessed man is the one who does not find in Him (Jesus) and His ministry and obstacle to belief.

There is an assumption that John had begun well and should now be careful that he does not stumble or be led into sin, because of his limited understanding of the Messiah and his program.

Essentially it was serving as a challenge to John to reexamine his presuppositions about the Messiah in the light of the Scriptures and Him fulfilling those, Scriptures.

You and I the reader now know that Jesus in his first coming came to deal with the problem of sin.

It's only in His second coming at the end of the tribulation period that Jesus comes as the judge to come and make war and be king on earth.

Revelation 19:11 LSB

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

Zechariah 14:9 LSB

And Yahweh will be king over all the earth; in that day Yahweh will be the only one, and His name one.

Application

As you deal with the trials and problems of life, do not doubt God or Jesus just because you do not understand what God is doing.

Don't let your limited understanding of God or Christ cause you to stumble. Like Job,

when God asked him all those questions that He could not answer.

The point is, Job, you're not powerful enough to change anything nor wise enough to understand everything, but despite this will you still choose to trust Me (God)

As you look at who Jesus is, as you look at the clear evidences of His works, as you see how his actions in his first coming fulfilled many, many prophecies, comfort and strengthen your heart knowing Jesus will accomplish those prophecies that still remain unfulfilled.

Conclusion

One comforting thought is that he who alone can pierce sinners' hearts is named "The Comforter." The Spirit who convicts us is also the Spirit who consoles. The same divine Spirit is both Wounder and Healer. —54.261

Charles Spurgeon

Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes Martyn Lloyd-Jones on Doubt Martyn Lloyd-Jones on Doubt

In his book, *Spiritual Depression*, Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes:

Doubts are not incompatible with faith....

Some people seem to think that once you become a Christian you should never be assailed by doubts. But that is not so, Peter still had faith (as he panicked in the storm in Matthew 14) His faith was not gone, but because it was weak, doubt mastered him and overwhelmed him and he was shaken....

Doubts will attack us, but that does not mean that we are to allow them to master us