

Expectation or Expectancy

Mark 1:6-11 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; (7) And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. (8) I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. (9) And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. (10) And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: (11) And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

For his entire life John the Baptist had been expecting the Messiah. It began when he was in the womb:

Luke 1:39-41 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, (40) and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. (41) And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

At this time Mary was pregnant with Jesus, and Elizabeth was pregnant with John the Baptist. When Mary came into their house, the John the Fetus leaped in the womb of his mother.

It was not surprising, because John was called to be the fore-runner of the Messiah. He was the prophesied messenger that went before him, who cried, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" and, "Make your paths straight". He called people to repentance to prepare them to meet the Messiah.

Matthew 3:13-17 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. (14) And John *tried* to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" (15) But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit *it to be so now*, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

John recognized Jesus as the Messiah, saying that he needed to be baptized by Jesus, not the other way around. When Jesus was baptized

the Spirit of God descended like a dove upon Him, and a voice from heaven said, "You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

This is what John said about it:

John 1:32-34 And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. (33) I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' (34) And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

Finally, the one he had been expecting had come. The Messiah was here! Why then did he later say this? –

Matthew 11:2-3 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples (3) and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

John had been waiting for the Messiah for his whole life. He was expecting Him at any time, and when He did come, it was confirmed to John by the sign and the voice at his baptism that this then was the One. How could John begin to doubt?

It was because he had begun to change from Expectancy to Expectation. At first he had an expectancy that the Messiah was coming, but now the Messiah was here, John had expectations about him. He expected the Messiah to look a certain way, to act a certain way, to do certain things. Their main expectation was that the Messiah would be a warrior who would lead them to victory over the Romans.

His expectancy of the coming Messiah had narrowed to an expectation about what the Messiah would look like or do. John the Baptist may not have had an expectation that Jesus would overthrow the Romans, but he may have had an expectation that Jesus would deliver him. Here he was in jail. His life was in danger. Didn't Jesus care? Here he was, faithfully preparing the way for Jesus. Proclaiming loudly that people needed to repent. He had seen and heard the miracles. Surely it wouldn't be hard for Jesus to have him set free from prison. For God manifest in the flesh it wasn't too hard to deliver John the Baptist from any problem or affliction that he had.

Aren't we like that too? We start out just overwhelmed with the joy and lightness that comes from knowing God. We are so happy to have the

burdens of our life released. We felt so clean when we repented of our sins and were baptized in Jesus' name. We were overjoyed when He filled us with His Holy Spirit. We looked forward to each day with an expectancy, looking forward to what Jesus was going to do in our life today. We came to each Church service with an expectancy, looking forward to how God was going to move in that service.

And then we allowed that expectancy to become an expectation. We no longer wondered what Jesus was going to do. We expected Him to do a specific thing in a specific time, and if He didn't, we became disappointed or even discouraged.

The thing is, we need expectancy in our Christian life. You could almost use the word "faith" as a synonym for expectancy. When we pray, we have an expectancy that God will answer, and we know Jesus responds to faith. We have to be careful to not let our faith become an expectation.

Why doesn't God heal me? I have been serving Him faithfully. Doesn't He care? Am I doing something wrong? Jesus, I expected that you would not let one of your children suffer like this.

And how about my work? How can it be God's will for me to have such a hard time there. Shouldn't I be supernaturally protected? As part of God's family, I should be able to expect better treatment than anyone else. I shouldn't ever have to worry about being sacked, or losing my house, or something bad happening to me or my kids, or anything ever going wrong, because Jesus has all power, I am His child, and I expect Him to look after me.

The three Hebrew boys, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, had an expectancy, not an expectation. When Nebuchadnezzar threatened to throw them into the burning fiery furnace, this is what they said:

Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. (17) If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. (18) But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

They said “God is able to deliver us from the furnace, but if He doesn’t we are still going to worship Him anyway.” They had an expectancy – they obviously wanted God to deliver them from the terrible trial that they were facing, but they also recognized that, if He didn’t deliver them, it was because He had another, better plan going on.

We are not God. Our knowledge and understanding is limited. If the only things that happened were those we expect, then we would lose the joy of surprise at how God chooses to do something. He moves in ways we never expect, and the things we go through have consequences and results far beyond what we realize.

Expectation says “This specific thing must happen”.

Expectancy says “Something good is going to happen. I am not sure what, but I will be ready when it comes.”

Matthew 11:4-5 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: (5) *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.*

That is why Jesus told John the Baptist’s disciples to remind him of the miracles. See, John. I am indeed the Messiah. I have all things in my hand. What you are suffering now is hard for you, but don’t worry. Everything is subject to me, and I have all things in hand. You may not understand it. You may fear what you are going through. It may be difficult for you, but – trust in Me. Have faith in the One you know is in control.

Expectation brings disappointment and discouragement, but expectancy sees the hand of God work in our life. Those of you who, like John the Baptist, need deliverance or victory or healing, come and we will pray for you. BUT don’t come with an expectation, come with an expectancy. We won’t pray with an expectation, we will pray with an expectancy. God IS going to hear our prayers. He is going to move. We are not sure how or what He will do, but we will be ready when He does.