"WRONG EXPECTATIONS"

Matthew 11:1-19
11/26/2017

INTRODUCTION:

***Beware of wrong expectations in the Christian life.**

Three examples of mis-expectations:

I. John the Baptist's Wrong Expectation of <u>JESUS</u> (v. 2-6)
(John questioned: *"Is this the real <u>Messiah</u>?"*)

II. The People's Wrong Expectation of <u>JOHN THE BAPTIST</u> (v. 7-15)
(The crowd questioned: *"Is this real <u>greatness</u>?"*)

III. The Unbeliever's Wrong Expectation of <u>JOHN AND JESUS</u> (v. 16-19)
(The religious leaders questioned: *"Is this real <u>spirituality</u>?"*)

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Things are not always what we think they should be.

Things don't always happen according to expectation.

We often expect one thing and get another. Our minds dream up illusions of grandeur only to have such misconceptions straightened out.

ILLUS: My expectation that the Sea of Galilee would be some huge body of water only to find it to be a small lake.

All of us have had expectations of something that didn't quite turn out to be as we thought (Ex: marriage, a certain food, a certain person, place or thing that didn't match our expectations).

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Prov. 13:12)

God clearly states: *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."* (Isaiah 55:8-9)

After recording Christ's warning to His disciples of the opposition and persecution they would face (chap. 10), Matthew now writes about the conflicts Jesus faced. Chapters 11 and 12 describe how the religious leaders of Jesus' day rebelled against His prophet John and He Himself.

V. 1

"Teach and preach" - Christ had a balanced public ministry of privately teaching (instructing) and publically preaching (proclaiming, heralding) the Word.

No doubt His teaching was mingled in with His preaching as it should be for pastors today (II Tim. 4:2).

***Beware of wrong expectations in the Christian life.**

Three examples of mis-expectations:

I. John the Baptist's Wrong Expectation of <u>JESUS</u> (v. 2-6)
(John questioned: *"Is this the real <u>Messiah</u>?"*)

V. 2

"In the prison" - John the Baptist was thrown into prison for preaching the truth.

John rebuked King Herod Antipas for incestuously living with his brother's wife. Herod's guilt-ridden woman Herodias, so as to block out the conviction and to stop any more embarrassing statements from John, had him thrown into prison (Mk. 6:17-20). She wanted to have him killed but could not (Mk. 6:19).

It was during this imprisonment that John begins to have doubts concerning the person of Jesus. John thought, *"Was He the Christ? Was I doing right by publically announcing Him and by preparing people to receive Him?"*

It is not hard to understand why John was so perplexed and troubled. In his mind, he wondered:

1) "If Jesus was the Messiah, why hasn't the promised Messianic <u>kingdom</u> come?"

2) If Jesus was the Messiah, why would He allow me to be thrown into prison?

   If Jesus was the Messiah and if I was doing God's will, why would God <u>allow</u> me to be so unjustly treated?

3) If Jesus is the Messiah, why doesn't He come and <u>rescue</u> me?

   NOTE: God's will may be that we <u>glorify</u> Him by a mean's other than by physical deliverance.

   Even if we are required to give our lives for Him, it does not mean that His love or presence has left us (Rom. 8:36ff).

"The works of Christ" **-**John, hearing about the great works of Christ perhaps wondered, "Why isn't He showing me any of these great works? His works are consistent with the Messiah, but why would He allow me to suffer so unjustly?

Don't let opposition discourage you. Let "John's" life be a reminder that:

--The "will of God" is not determined by the ease of ministry (one may be completely <u>out</u> of the will of God and circumstances may be great)

--Trouble or problems do not necessarily mean that you are out of the "will of God" (one may be completely <u>in</u> the will of God and troubles may strike on every side -- EX: Job)

--Even the greatest of God's servants (11:11) are not exempt from persecution, yea, even execution (martyrdom)

--Your faith, like John's, will be tested

--Righteousness is not always rewarded in this life in the way it deserves (we live in an unfair world because we live in a sin-cursed world)

V. 3

"Art thou he that should come" - lit. Are you the "coming one"? Are you the one the Old Testament said would come? Are you the real promised Messiah or should we be expecting someone else?

One of the Messiah's titles besides the "son of David" or "King of kings" would be the "Coming One." The Old Testament prophesied of Christ: *"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me."* (Psalm 40:7); *"Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD."* (Psalm 118:26).

John no doubt wanted to cry out like the martyred saints under the altar who said: *"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"* (Rev. 6:10)

V. 4

Jesus could have given John a simple "Yes" answer, but rather gave enough evidence to speak for itself.

"Shew John again those things which ye do hear and see" - Confirm to John about My
1) Message ("hear")
2) Miracles ("see")

(Note: Christ's miracles were to vindicate His message)

V. 5

Jesus is saying: "Go tell John that I have power over:
blindness
deformity or paralysis
leprosy
deafness
death"

Such miracles were totally consistent with what the Old Testament prophets said concerning the Messiah.

Isaiah 35:5-6 - *"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing..."*

Why ***"the poor"***? Because they were the only ones who were willing to listen (cp. Mt. 19:16-24).

They had ears that were not clogged by the sound of money. They had hearts that were not hardened through the deceitfulness of riches. (Mark 4:19; I Tim. 6:17).

"The gospel preached" - this good news was again a prophetic promise of that which the Messiah would deliver (Is. 61:1 - *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach the good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."*)

V. 6

"Offended in Me" - the ones blessed by God are those who refuse to let anything or anyone trip up their faith in Christ. They will not stumble because of opposition that may come for Jesus' sake.

For John, it meant that he would not doubt Christ's Messiahship even though he was in prison for the Messiah he prepared the way for.

Often when Christianity does not match up to someone's illusions of grandeur, they, in disillusionment, abandon it altogether!

Don't let a wrong expectation about Christianity shake your faith!

II. The People's Wrong Expectation of <u>JOHN THE BAPTIST</u> (v. 7-15)
(The crowd questioned: *"Is this real <u>greatness</u>?"*)

V. 7

"The world has many standards by which it measures greatness. These standards include intellectual achievement, political and military leadership, scientific and medical discoveries, wealth and power, and athletic, dramatic, literary and musical skill." (MacARthur, p. 249)

Although John had none of those qualities, yet there was none ever born greater.

"The wilderness" = the wilderness of Judea (Mt. 3:1), where John baptized and prepared people's hearts to receive Christ.

Rumors travelled: "Hey, did you hear about this mighty orator named John? "He is a great preacher." "People are amazed at his messages." "News has it that multitudes are following him and submitting to his baptism." "Let's go see what all of this is about."

As they went, no doubt each had formed a concept in their minds regarding what John would be like. Some no doubt thought that he would be a soft, pliable, flexible man, who would compromise with the religious leaders of his day. Or perhaps an unsteady man who didn't quite have his doctrine straight, who would be moved like *"a reed shaken with the wind."* They found him, however, to be a firm and rigid ancient fundamentalism who preached hard. (Mt. 3:7)

John did not vacillate with every change of society, but held firm to his convictions. We need such courage today!

V. 8

Others probably perceived John as this mighty "kingly" figure who wore an expensive white flowing silk robe and ate grapes at the hands of a harem, only to find that he wore a rough garment made of camel's hair with a raw-hide belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey all by himself in a barren desert (Mt. 3:4).

John wasn't a man of luxury (***"soft raiment"***), but a man of self-discipline and self-denial.

Don't judge a man's ministry by his:

1. Popularity (EX: how big his church is)
2. Personality (EX: how smooth he talks and acts)
3. Luxury (EX: his clothes, car, etc.)

V. 9

Others no doubt thought that John would be a prophet in the likes of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Daniel. But Jesus said that John was *"<u>more</u> than a prophet."* Reason: John was a **<u>fulfillment</u>** of prophecy! He would be the long-awaited forerunner of the Messiah.

V. 10

God the Father speaking to God the Son said in Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 that he would send His *"messenger"* (*angelos*) to prepare the way for Jesus.

V. 11

John the Baptist was considered the ***"greatest"*** because he had the greatest privilege, the highest responsibility, the noblest task, the most honorable job--that being to announce to the world that the Messiah has come!

"He that is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he" (John) -- What does this mean?

1) Does it mean that John, because of his doubts (11:3), was not yet a believer? (probably NOT)

2) Does it mean that because John was still alive and not in Heaven, then anyone who believes and passes on into Heaven has a greater position than John? (YES, this seems to be the best view).

   The most privileged are not those who are living on earth, but those who are living in the presence of God in Heaven.

   What a privilege to be saved! No wonder Paul desired to be absent from the body (II Cor. 5:8).

   Anyone enjoying the "spiritual dimension" of Heaven is greater than anyone existing in the "human dimension" of the earth.

V. 12

What is mean by the words ***"violence"*** and ***"violent"***?

Since the Gospels interpret themselves, by comparing this statement to the parallel passage in Luke 16:16, we gain insight into what Jesus is saying: (*"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it"*).

The word translated *"violent"* simply means *"forceful"*.

In spite of the kingdom of God suffering forceful opposition by those who were the enemies of Christ, those who really wanted to be saved would forcefully make every effort to enter in and lay hold of the promised Kingdom (ILLUS: the great effort to get on a crowded subway train at rush hour in NYC).

It was John's hellfire and damnation preaching that stirred people to storm and rush into the Kingdom.

God used John to quicken the conscience of people as to the enormity of their sin and need of salvation.

V. 13

"Until John" - the appearance of John the Baptist marked the transition from Old Testament law to the New Testament Church age. A new dispensation was being prepared for by John as he announced the Lamb of God - the One who would shed His blood to begin a new Testament (new covenant).

V. 14

"Elias" - Elijah

John, who was a Nazarite like Elijah, who ate like Elijah, who preached like Elijah (in a sense) was Elijah.

Was he literally Elijah? No.

Does this mean that Elijah really is not coming after all? No. Elijah is coming! (Mt. 17:11 - *"Elias truly shall* [in the future] *first come, and restore* [future tense] *all things"*).

But in a typical form, John was similar to Elijah and was a type or picture of the future Elijah who will come (Mt. 17:12-13).

John was similar to Elijah in this sense: John, like Elijah will be, was a forerunner of Christ (Lk. 1:17; Jn. 1:21).

John prepared the way for Christ's first coming. Elijah himself will prepare the way for Christ's second coming (SEE: Malachi 4:1, 5)

Mal. 4:5 - "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."

The Jews were expecting Elijah to literally come back (Mk. 8:28), and since he never died (II Ki. 2:1), He will! Perhaps as one of God's two witnesses (Rev. 11:3-12).

V. 15

Everyone has ears, but not everyone has *"**ears to hear**"*. That is, not all people are open and receptive to God's truth.

For those of you who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, listen intently to what the Spirit is saying in His Word (cp. Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, etc.)

The message that needed to be *"heard"* was this: John is indeed the forerunner, and I am indeed the Messiah whose way he prepared (in the power and spirit of Elijah) (Lk. 1:16-17).

III. The Unbeliever's Wrong Expectation of <u>JOHN AND JESUS</u> (v. 16-19)
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V. 16

"Whereunto shall I liken" *- "What analogy or example can I give to describe this generation*?" How can I illustrate it?

NOTE: the generation we live among today are very much like that of the first century (lukewarm, calloused, and unresponsive).

V. 17

While their parents shopped or sold in the market place, the children would play two games ["Wedding" (mimic a flute playing) and "Funeral" [mimic the paid mourners)]. (MacArthur, p. 260-61

There were always "hold-outs" who would refuse to go along with the other children and play these games.

So, children are playing in the marketplace. A few begin to play wedding music on their pipes and cry out to others, "Let's march, be happy, and play 'wedding'!" The others shout back, "No, we don't want to dance around today." So the first group, still wanting to play, begin to play funeral music and shout back, "Well then, let's play 'Funeral'." "No, we don't want to play funeral either. We don't feel like acting sad."

Jesus is accusing them of being unmoved and unresponsive to His miracles and message (SEE v. 20).

Because of their hard hearts, they did not act upon what they heard. Their wills were not affected. They just coldly sat there and did not realize who was speaking or what was being said.

*Always ask God for a tender heart, a soft pliable spirit that he can touch and move.

V. 18

John ate locusts and wild honey (a simple diet of a nomad) and being a Nazarite did not drink any fruit of the vine. And despite his sacrifices, rather than being applauded for his sacrifices, he is accused of being demon-possessed. He was Holy Spirit-possessed (cp. Lk. 1:15), but was not demon possessed.

I had a member of some cult make the same accusation against me.

When people falsely accuse you, realize you are not the first!

Mt. 5:11 - *"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake."*

V. 19

"Eating and drinking" - Jesus ate what others ate; He also drank of the fruit of the vine (unfermented wine).

But He was wrongly accused of gluttony, alcoholism, and partying with "low-lifers."

When people do not want to hear the truth, they will often discredit and criticize the speaker so as to justify or excuse themselves from listening.

NOTE: The reason Jesus associated with publicans and sinners was not to condone their sin, but to save them from their sin.

Jesus was friendly to such people but it was wrong to insinuate that He was close companions with them (as if He did what they did, went where they went, etc.).

They judged Jesus by "guilt by association." Because Jesus did not hang out with the hypocritical, religious clergy of His day, He was slandered (SEE: Mt. 9:10-13).

"Wisdom is justified of her children" - this proverbial statement describes wisdom as bearing offspring or fruit.

What Jesus is saying is that "Wisdom is proven to be true wisdom by the fruit it produces." He is saying: I am proven righteous by my deeds. My miracles attest to my Messiah-ship. My good works manifest that I am not what you accuse me of being.

People may say what they want about you, but let your works speak for your faith. Let your Godly life validate your Christianity. Show your faith by your works (James 2:18).

True spirituality shows itself not by "word, fame, or popular opinion" but by truth, righteousness, and holy living!

CONCLUSION:

You don't have to live up to people's expectations. Live up to God's expectations!