

Beyond Expectation

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John and Andrew were following John the Baptist when he pronounced Jesus to be the Lamb of God. When they heard this pronouncement, they left the Baptist and followed after Jesus. When Jesus saw that they were following Him, He asked them, “What do you seek?” (Jn. 1:36-38) The Greek word here is *zeteo* [2212] and this question could be colloquially rendered, “What do you have in mind?” At the least, John and Andrew had thoughts of a Warrior-King Messiah who would conquer Israel’s enemies, especially the hated Romans. Over the next several years, however, they would need to constantly re-adjust their thinking as Jesus refused to be what they expected but instead insisted on being more than they could expect, imagine and, at times, even believe. (Mt. 8:27, etc.) In fact, Jesus’ entire ministry could be described as little more than a series of incidents designed to confront the hidden false expectations everyone had of Him. In a world dominated by falsehoods, illusions, deceptions and lies, what different kind of story would expect from the life of the King of Truth? (Jn. 18:36)

Jesus said, “...the truth shall make you free.” (Jn. 8:32) One of the primary deceptions the truth frees us from then, is our false expectations. Particularly dangerous to our spirit and soul’s well-being are false expectations as to who and what Jesus is and what it means to follow Him. Jesus said that “those who worship [God] must worship in spirit and truth.” (Jn. 4:24) Those who presume to follow after Christ and God on the basis of their own false expectations are those who follow after a false or counterfeit “God” on the basis of their flesh or soul and in error and deception, some of which are the very things Jesus came to destroy (1 Jn. 3:8), the very things the King of Truth by His Spirit of truth must lead us out of so as to lead us into all truth. (Jn. 16:13) God, who honors all sincere seeking of Him in spite of one’s current impurities of deception or ignorance, meets people where they are at and then, because of and in love, leads them out of the deceptions they labor under, some of which lie deeply buried under ideas of both truth and falsehood, making a muddled mixture of the two. Some of these deceptions and errors are much-cherished beliefs that actually prevent us from being able to come into the full light of truth. It is when a person refuses to follow the Spirit of truth into all truth that begins the process of rejecting one’s inheritance in the kingdom of God.

It is these much-cherished but false beliefs and expectations which are the most dangerous to our soul. We believe that because God honored whatever sincere desires we have for Him within our soul, that He is the author of the context in which we met Him. Thus the “church,” referring to all the ways it counterfeits the ekklesia of Christ and subverts followers away from the kingdom of God, is the greatest single diversion away from the truth that the devil has yet perpetrated against the people of Christ. Only those with eyes to see and ears to hear **and** whose hearts are more loyal to Christ than to the context in which they were introduced to Him are those who can recognize and receive this truth.

Our expectations about Christ are rooted in half-buried half-truths that are wrapped up in desires and expectations for self-fulfillment. James and John’s mother had great expectations about Jesus and tried to get the numbers two and three positions for her sons (Mt. 20:21) and the disciples seem to have argued repeatedly over who should be the greatest in the kingdom. (Lk. 9:46, etc.) Jesus told James and John they didn’t know what they were asking for (Mt. 20:22) and told the disciples that a little child, who did not strive for position but simply lived life, was the model for greatness in the kingdom of God. (Lk. 9:47-48, Mt. 18:1-5)

This is the perversity of the human heart:

- Because we seek the great Messiah-King, we too expect to be considered great (or at least good) and significant.
- Because we have learned many things from the Bible, we expect to be welcomed into the kingdom of God.
- Because we have performed some religious ritual or had some spiritual experience, we expect to live forever.
- Because Jesus performed miracles of healing, we expect never to be sick or die.
- Because Jesus never seemed to have had financial difficulties we expect to be rich with plenty, having neither need nor want for anything.
- Because Jesus said no one could steal us away from God (Jn. 10:28), we expect to be able to live in a self-centered, sinful lifestyle and be abundantly welcomed by Christ into eternity with Him.
- Because we have had a genuine experience with Christ and sincerely desire and try to walk with Him, we expect that everyone whom we gather with in His name (especially those who claim to be something – “pastor,” “apostle,” “prophet,” etc.) will have a similar mindset.

Each of these expectations are false in one way or another and they represent the greater – or at least the deeper and therefore the more subtly influential – portion of our identity and soulful existence. And it is these only half-recognized, deeply-buried expectations that shape our faith – and wherever our faith is based on a lie, the “native language” and “natural resources” of the devil (Jn. 8:44), the spirits of darkness gain a measure of influence or control over our lives. And the more important the deception (i.e., about Christ or God as compared to lesser matters), the more power and influence the demonic gains. And even here our expectations about the demonic – that they only cause people to scream and have violent epileptic fits (see however Lk. 4:34, Acts 12:8-10, 16:16-17, etc.) – will blind us to the more dangerous work of the demonic, that of deceiving us into believing ever more lies so that they gain yet more power over us with the intent of diverting us, if possible, from the path that leads to eternal life. (Mt. 7:14) This is the subtle, insidious and potentially lethal work of the demonic – built largely on our hidden, half-recognized expectations (or paradigms) – and “church” is perhaps the devil’s most effective scheme to lure people into voluntarily separating themselves from the Savior and Shepherd Christ Jesus.

Satan is perfectly willing and capable of sending a lying spirit to us with “revelations” that suit our purposes and fulfill our desires for significance in the eyes of others, that tickle our ears or stroke our ego or send us racing off in directions we already want to go. And he is not at all particular about which lie we first believe. Even something as trivial as refusing to capitalize the word “Satan” – which is a mild form of “speaking evil of spiritual dignitaries” and a subtle form of spiritual pride (Jude 8-9) – can be the basis upon which lying spirits can gain an initial

foothold within the soul and thinking of a believer. Or it could be a half-truth, like the “once saved always saved” interpretations of salvation which are built on truths but are not the whole counsel of God, which the believer tenaciously holds onto at the expense of the whole truth – thereby giving power over his life to the demonic. It is these subtle “little” lies which, being something made by the devil and is not from the realms of truth (1 Jn. 2:21), which forms a “forward base” within the soul from which further deceptions and torments can be attempted. It is in this realm of guarding against the “little” deceptions that “theology” has brought about great damage. Every misbelief and false teaching (in the eyes of God) has some “theologian” or “Bible scholar” or Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic “expert” espousing and promoting that idea. But no matter how much (or how little) we study the Bible, any doctrine we concoct apart from the leading of the Holy Spirit of truth is, at the least, a “private interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20) and may well prove to be a “doctrine of demons.” (1 Tim. 4:1) Worse still, the unity of the faith (Eph. 4:13) cannot be attained to by “church”-ites whose denominational ideas and loyalties (already predisposed to some misbelief or false teaching) preclude the genuine gifting of God that bring about spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:11) and the unanimity (Greek, *henotes* [1775]) of the *Spirit*. (Eph. 4:3) Thus, each misbelief and false teaching not only has its teachers and supporting “experts” but also its own loyal following and most often the truth cannot be found by any process that seeks unanimity or consensus, the safeguard God provided against spiritually dangerous deceptions.

The end times will produce many who are exactly what the mixed multitudes of the “church” and the followers of the world’s religions expect a “prophet” or “messiah” or “teacher” to be. (Mt. 24:11,24, 2 Tim. 4:3-4, 2 Pet. 2:1) But their message and power source will be deception, demonic, Satanic. (2 Ths. 2:9, 1 Tim. 4:1) The only group of men (and women) today who fulfill exactly all the prophecies, especially the scale of *many* who deceive *many* are the “church’s” “pastors” (Mt. 24:5) and the only people who will escape their clutches are those who obey the call to “come out” from among the “Christian” idolaters (2 Cor. 6:17, 1 Cor. 5:10-11) and learn to hear Christ for themselves (Jn. 10:27, 1 Jn. 2:27, Heb. 8:10-11) and obediently follow the Spirit of Christ and God wherever He leads. (Heb. 5:9, Rom. 8:14) As these follow only the Spirit of truth and retake their place and heritage as sons of the kingdom, they will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. (Jn. 16:13, Mt. 13:38, 43)

There is at least one major difference between our time and the time of Christ – the Jewish people of Christ’s time expected the Messiah and received the outpoured Holy Spirit whereas the believers of our time somewhat fearfully expect to witness and experience the fulfillment of the end-times prophecies. And whereas Christ proclaimed the kingdom of God, history shows that the “church,” especially the counterfeit of the ekklesia, is what came into being. Similarly, the “church” is proclaiming and counting on a snatching away (so-called “rapture” – 1 Ths. 4:16-17) that will take them out of the tribulation that comes on the whole earth. (Rev. 3:10) Yet these misunderstood and mis-applied prophecies are more likely than anything else to produce people who say, “My Master is delaying His coming” and who attack, verbally if not physically, their brothers and who indulge in worldly pleasures. (Mt. 24:48-49) In many ways, those who expect a literal and complete fulfillment of the end-times’ prophecies (as they are written but not as routinely and most often taught) will fare the best, no matter what happens in our lifetime.

Our expectations are intricately connected to our faith. Jesus often said, “As your faith so be it unto you.” (Mt. 9:29, etc.) If we turn a blind eye toward our expectations – as is true of our “theology” and faith – then we have failed to uphold our end of God’s covenant with us and we

should not expect to inherit any of His promises. As the writer of Hebrews warns us, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Heb. 2:1-3)

Let he who has ears hear.

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