

1.

## **Introduction**

1.

## **Expectations.**

1.

Jesus asked, "Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?" (Matt. 7:9-10) We know how to give good gifts to our children, and delight to do so. But sometimes we have to tell them, "No, you can't have it." And what do they say in reply? "But I want it!"

2.

At Westminster Seminary Dr. Witmer often told suffering students who might also one day be suffering pastors, "Disappointment is a function of expectation." There is wisdom in that maxim, but I never found it encouraging. I always wondered, "Do you really mean we should lower our expectations?" Do you truly want me to lose all hope? What happened to "Aim high" and "Be all you can be?"

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.

" (

**Prov. 3:5-6**

) "

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

" (

**Ps. 37:4**

) It's not wise to lower your expectations when you hope for or even expect something good.

But make sure you expect the

right

things, not the

wrong

things! That's where Dr. Witmer's advice will help you. "Disappointment is a function of expectation."

3.

John the Baptist and John's disciples were disappointed with Jesus. Are you? Jesus

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replies, "Blessed is the one who is not offended by me." In this passage Matthew shows you the way to that blessing.

4.

**Outline.** In v. 1 Matthew reminds you of the nature of Jesus' ministry. In vv. 2-3 he raises the question, "Does it fit with God's Messianic promises?" In vv. 4-6, Christ answers "Yes, to eyes of faith."

1.

**The Nature of Jesus' Ministry v. 1**

2.

**Does It Fit God's Messianic Promises? vv. 2-3**

3.

**Yes, to Eyes of Faith vv. 4-6**

4.

**Body**

1.

**The Nature of Jesus' Ministry v. 1.** First remember the nature of Jesus' ministry.

1.

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### Text

1.

1 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

2.

**Outline.** In its bare outline, v. 1 states two things: first, Christ ministered specially to His disciples, specifically by training and sending them on their first evangelistic mission, and second, Christ ministered generally to the people in the cities of Israel, specifically by teaching and preaching.

3.

**Summary.** In summary, v. 1 focuses our attention on the most prominent activity which characterized Christ's ministry: teaching and preaching the gospel. In this verse Matthew doesn't mention the miracles Christ performed.

4.

### Connector/transition

1.

This is one of the high-level boundary markers in the book, ending the section of narrative followed by teaching in ch.'s 8-10, and beginning the identically-structured section in ch.'s 11-13. The gospel of Matthew is divided into 5 sections each structured in this same way: narrative, then Christ's sermon, then a broad summary statement like we have in v. 1.

[1](#)

2.

This means v. 1 is a transitional verse connecting the preceding section—ch.'s 8-10—to the new section—ch.'s 11-13. Ch.'s 8-10 taught us about the works of the kingdom, and ch.'s 11-13 teach about the nature of the kingdom

. Because v. 1 summarizes Christ's works, it should bring to mind all of what He did in ch.'s 8-10—not only His teaching, but also His miracles. Do you remember how He healed the leper, the centurion's paralyzed servant, Peter's sick mother-in-law, calmed His disciples and the storm, cast out demons, raised the dead girl to life, gave sight to the two blind men? And amidst these healings, do you remember what He taught? He is willing to make you clean, heals with only a word, calls you simply to believe, to follow Him, even the wind and waves—and demons—obey Him, He has power on earth to forgive sins, desires mercy and not sacrifice, calls sinners to repentance, celebrates a feast rather than a fast, and sends His disciples to preach the good news.

3.

These are the works of His kingdom, and they indicate its nature. Are they what you expect? Are they what you want? Do you know they are what you need? You need this Savior, and this kingdom, even if you don't think so yet.

4.

**Does It Fit God's Messianic Promises? vv. 2-3.** In vv. 2-3 Matthew leads you to ask this question about the nature of Jesus' ministry: "

Does it fit God's Messianic promises?" Is Jesus really the Savior?

1.

## **Text**

1.

2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples

2.

3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

3.

Christ had heard of John's imprisonment in Matt. 4:12. Now for the first time in Matthew's presentation, in prison John hears of Jesus' works, and responds to them with the most important of questions—"Are you the one?"

4.

**The Deeds of the Christ.** Matthew uses the interesting phrase "deeds of the Christ," which could also be translated "

Messianic deeds.

" In inspired hindsight Matthew wrote his Gospel account fully believing that Jesus was the promised Messiah—"

the Christ

"—and Matthew's purpose here is to teach this fact. But for John the question is not yet fully settled—John asks whether Jesus is the Christ, and so from John's perspective, he thought he was hearing about the "

Messianic deeds

" promised in the OT, and wondered whether Jesus' deeds truly fit God's OT promises.

5.

**Reasons for & against believing Jesus is the Christ.**

1.

**For.** John had the best of reasons to believe Jesus was the Christ. First, by God's inspiration John had prophesied that Jesus was the Christ, the " Son of God" (**John 1:34**), and John believed God's word which he prophesied. Second, John heard that Jesus preached the good news of salvation, and that Jesus performed miracles of healing with a power that could only come from God. John's question itself indicates John's willingness to believe in Jesus' Messiahship, because John asked

Jesus

to give the final answer. John trusted Jesus' authority. It appears that John still had need for his faith to be reassured. He sought consolation in his imprisonment, which spelled the end of his

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ministry as the forerunner to Christ. If Jesus was the one, John could rest assured that though he suffered in prison even unto death, the Messiah had come, God was at work, and would save His people.

2.

**Against.** John also had reasons to doubt Jesus was the Christ. First, it could seem Jesus brought no judgment. Isaiah said "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God." (Isaiah 35:4) John's message was "

The axe is laid to the root of the trees....the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." (

**Matt. 3:10, 12**

) John may not have been able to see that only in Christ's second coming would He carry out His full work as the final Judge. Second, Christ brought no political or military might; no external pomp and power as men might expect. The OT describes the Messiah's salvation as spiritual in nature, but with political effects (

**Dan. 2:45**

), and John taught nothing different. But John's disciples, the Zealots, and others then and now too easily expect Christ to immediately crush His political and military enemies, and John was tempted to think this way as much as any. After all, John was in prison, and in his weaker moments would easily be disappointed as he remembered God's promises that the Messiah would bring good news to the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, open the eyes of the blind, and set the prisoner free

! (Is. 35:10; 61:1; Ps. 146:7) Jesus did all the other things, but He left John to die in prison. He didn't visit him, send anyone to help him; He didn't set this prisoner free! Would the Messiah do that?

3.

Implications. Yes, the Messiah did that. Some implications follow for you to remember.

1.

John was a prophet, and by divine inspiration and authority had declared Jesus to be the "Son of God

" (

**John 1:34**

). Yet he began to wonder whether that prophecy would come true in regard to Jesus fulfilling all the promises of the OT about the Messiah.

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2.

Remember that the greatest saints are not always strong in their faith; sometimes our faith is mixed with unbelief. " Among those born of women, there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. " (Matt. 11:11)

3.

Remember that unbelief can conquer belief for a time.

4.

Remember that John needed the answer for himself, for his disciples, and for you.

5.

**Yes, to Eyes of Faith vv. 4-6.** Does the nature of Jesus' ministry fit God's Messianic promises? Yes, to eyes of faith. If you see Jesus through the eyes of unbelief, you will be "offended" by Him. But if you see Jesus through the eyes of faith, you will be "blessed."

1.

### Text

1.

4 And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see:

2.

5 the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the

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

3.

6 And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

4.

**True fulfillment of prophecy.** Christ, and Matthew, intend for you to learn that Jesus truly fulfilled the OT prophecies about the Messiah. Christ's point is that "

What you hear and see  
"

is  
the fulfillment of OT prophecies. The facts match the prophecy, and the prophecy is the right explanation of the facts. There is a pure simplicity in the way OT prophecy was fulfilled in this case.

5.

**A stumbling block.** However, there is also a stumbling block in this fulfillment. A twofold danger—danger in our unbelief & selfishness, and danger in misunderstanding God's promises.

1.

**Our unbelief & selfishness.** First, in regard to our unbelief & selfishness. With the eyes of faith, you simply see that God is keeping His promises. But with the eyes of unbelief, you don't see God doing what you selfishly want Him to do.

2.

**Misunderstanding God's promises.** Second, in regard to misunderstanding God's promises. There is an interpretive difficulty over which we may stumble when we are seeking our own selfish ends. That interpretive difficulty is that we expect Christ's kingdom to be of a different nature than it is. We expect His works to be of a different nature than they are.

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3.

**Examples.** We hear God's promises to give good gifts to those who ask; His promises to bless and not to curse us, and then we feel God is unjust for not giving us what we wanted. "Why didn't I get that job? But I wanted it, God!" "Why didn't I get that spouse? But I wanted them!" "Why didn't I get that friend, that honor, that comfort, God? But I wanted it!"

Do you want what God wants?  
? Listen to what John the Baptist said so humbly in

**John 3:29**

"  
The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease.  
" There you see the eyes of faith in Christ, and a heart truly indwelt by Jesus Christ who also said to His Father, "  
Not my will, but thine be done.

" (

**Luke 22:42**

)

Do you want what God wants?  
?

4.

**Application.** In Christ's ministry, in the ministry of the church, in God's providence in your life, do you see your salvation or damnation? You will see Jesus Christ either with eyes of faith or eyes of unbelief and selfishness. **Isaiah 8:14** says Christ "will become a sanctuary

and a  
stone of offense  
and a rock of stumbling.

" "

A sanctuary  
" for believers; an "  
offense

" for unbelievers. After I handed one household an invitation to our VBS titled "The King Is Coming," one loud yelled to me as I walked away, "Lucifer is already here!" "

We are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

" (

**2 Cor. 2:16-17**

) If you cling to your freedom to walk on the road that leads to destruction, what you will see in Christ is that He wants to put your desires, your pleasures, and your goals, to death. You'll

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conclude "Christianity is no fun!" Even as a believer, when you suffer and don't get what you want, beware lest you take your eyes off of the true nature of God's kingdom. Christ may call you to suffer in prison, or even die, for His sake. He does call you to undergo loss, hardship, and pain in this life. Blessed is the one who is not offended by that.

5.

### Conclusion

1.

**The nature of the kingdom.** The way to receive this blessing is to see the true nature of Christ's kingdom with eyes of faith. Turn with me again to **Isaiah**  
**h 35:5-7**

, and notice the word "

for

" in

**v. 6**

: "

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

For

waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

" According to Isaiah, Christ performed miracles of healing not merely to heal men's bodies, but also "

for

" the reason of a broader purpose described in vv. 6bff with metaphorical terms, but stated literally in v. 4:

The general promise God makes is that "

He will come and

save

you.

" (

**Is. 35:4**

) The true nature of Christ's kingdom is that it is a saving kingdom; a redemptive kingdom. He is about the work of saving you in body

and

soul. Do you see Him doing that? With eyes of faith we do! When God doesn't give you what you wanted, do you still see that He gives you the greatest of blessings in His ordinary providence and His special redemptive blessings of calling, regeneration, faith and repentance,

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justification, adoption, and sanctification? Do you wonder why you don't see Him bring a complete end to injustice, bodily suffering, and to your own sin today? Now we see in part, but one day we will see Him face to face. He

will

give you that final blessing of glorification as the icing on the cake of salvation; the crown of glory (

**2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10**

).

2.

In Christ's ministry, in the ministry of the church, in God's providence in your life, do you see your salvation or damnation? Do you set your minds on things above, or on things below? Christ does fulfill God's promises that the Messiah will bring salvation to all who believe in Him. It is by that faith, amidst the great tribulation of this life, that we still see in God's saving work that Christ came "To comfort all who mourn...to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified. " (Is.

**61:2-3**

)

1 The other transitional formulae are found in 7:28, 13:53, 19:1, and 26:1.