

Daily Devotional, December 8, 2020 Great Expectations?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Romans 12:1 (NIV)

Whenever our expectations and reality do not match up, we often have a strong reaction. For instance, we become elated when the car repair bill is far less than we had estimated, and yet, we are just as easily frustrated when the refrigerator suddenly breaks down and must be replaced. The longer we live, the more our expectations become ever deeply ingrained. Imagine how embedded your expectation would be if, for some 50 generations, your family had been told to expect a specific thing to happen? The build-up would be extraordinary. Fifty generations is a long time to wait for one single promised event to occur. And this is just exactly how it was for the Jewish people leading up to Jesus' birth.

For century after long century, they had been expecting a Messiah. Their expectations, which began and multiplied over those many hundreds of years, were that of a warrior king, a defender, a conqueror, someone to settle all their scores and, ultimately, place their people in a position of ultimate power at the top of the pecking order. When we look at Jesus through the perspective of the Jewish people's expectation, we can see why so many of them dismissed him as their long-awaited Messiah.

Prophets like Nathan, Micah and Isaiah disclosed specifics to the Jewish nation over long periods of time what the arrival of the Messiah would be like, how he would live and, ultimately, how he would die. All of these details were well-known to the people by the time Jesus was born. Yet, even with all of these Messianic prophecies, many Jews completely missed their Messiah. When their hopes and expectations were not met with the reality of how the birth and life of Christ played out, they were disheartened, and many rejected him all together.

Do we do the same thing today? Do we have a crisis of faith when our expectations of who Jesus is and how He should be reacting to our needs and demands collide with reality? For many of us, I believe the answer is yes. There are times when we struggle, sometimes deeply, with the difference between what we expected from Jesus and what has actually happened or is now happening. What do we do when we find ourselves in limbo, caught between our expectations and reality? Romans 12:1 is our answer, and what it reveals to us is that we are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices before the Lord. In other words, lay it all down before him. Lay it all there at his feet — unmet expectations, resentment, confusion, worry, anger, fear —lay it all down and see what he does inside your heart to bring about a change you could not have ever imagined.

In the eyes of his own people, Jesus was not fit to be their conception of king. Yet he came to the world with more majesty and power than can be humanly understood. They could not see it because they were looking with their eyes, not with their hearts. When expectation and reality collide, look to Jesus with your heart. For it is there within your heart that you will find him.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, so many times I miss you in my life. My expectations of you often force me to look far beyond you as I search for miracles and expectations that are far beyond your vision of what I truly need. Help me to see you more clearly and not to look beyond the reality of what I really need, but to realize that your guiding presence in my life is far more important than the desires of my flesh. Grant me a clear vision of what your expectations for my life are and how I can live meet those expectations by walking in the light of my Savior. Your will, not mine be done, to the glory of Your holy name, Amen.