

Weaving the Word

The One to Come

January 14, 2018

Welcome to where we're learning the language of the Lord!



When is the last time Jesus disappointed you?

We're about 14 months before the cross, in Galilee and Jesus has just prepared the Twelve to lay their lives on the line in Judea.



So they [the Twelve] **set out** [in six pairs] **They went out** [of Galilee] **and went from village to village**, [in Judea] preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them [for about two months]. – Mk 6:12-13; Lk 9:6 NIV

And, as they expected, their lives were often put at risk.

Jesus disappoints so many, so deeply, so often. *Know why: His failure ... to meet our expectations* – our subtle assumptions that He'll bless, protect, and answer us in certain specific ways. You know what Jesus' problem is? **He's unwilling to measure down to our standards.** And, we're unwilling to *measure up*.

It's never that He's not doing enough. It's just that it's too much ... for us to comprehend.

But, whenever He "fails" us, it still feels confusing and unloving and unfair.



At this point in Jesus' ministry, John the Baptist has been sitting in Herod's prison, awaiting his fate, for nearly *two years!*

There's no greater danger than building your faith on theological expectations that collapse in a crisis; whether death, divorce, addiction, illness, custody, bankruptcy, or prison (like John).

After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee. [Having sent His 72 other disciples to prepare them] When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent **his disciples** to ask him, "**Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?**" – Mt 11:1-3 NIV

John's theological expectations were certainly not being met.

And, no doubt he's feeling confused and frustrated and scared.

But then, he'd been somewhat out-of-the-loop since the beginning of his ministry.

John bore witness, [looking back on Jesus' baptism] saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. **I did not know Him,** [Now, John knew that his cousin Jesus was the promised *Messiah*, thanks to the angel, the shepherds, and the wise men,] 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.**' – John 1:32-33 NKJ

And, *that's* the part he didn't know.

[God said in Malachi] "I [God] will send **my messenger,** [John] who will prepare the way before **me.** Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking **will come** to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, **will come,**" says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of **his coming?** Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap." ... "Surely the day **is coming;** it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that **is coming** will set them on fire," says the Lord Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. – Malachi 3:1-2, 4:1 NIV

And so, long before cousin Jesus came to be baptized, John had been preaching the message of the *One* who was to *come with fire.*



John the Baptist **came**, preaching ... "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." **This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:** [in Isaiah chapter 40 (40:3)] "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the **Lord,** [as in "God"] ...'" But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees ... he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the **coming wrath?** ... every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me **will come** one who is more powerful than I [He knows it'll be God; but, no idea it'll be *Jesus!*] ... He will baptize [i.e. *cleanse*] you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. [Not in a pleasant way] ... he will clear his threshing floor ... burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Then **Jesus came** from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But **John** tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and **do you come to me?**" [He believed the Messiah would establish an earthly kingdom, after God appeared with His *flame thrower*] Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. [He's in for a shock!] As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. – Mat 3:1-16 NIV

John had no idea how the One to come would look. He could only imagine ... which of course *he couldn't* ... which is why, when He came, John argued with Him.

Jesus excels in appearing as we least expect.

Why didn't John recognize Jesus as the One to come? It's quite profound: **his cousin didn't act like God; God acted like his cousin.** And, *no one saw that One* coming!

The only time the Lord will ever let us down, is when we expect Him to be someone He isn't or to do something He won't. And, this is where our faith is so often derailed.

In our disappointment we feel abandoned, afraid, and alone; yet, instead of seeking His reasons in His Word, we abandon *Him*. But, **faith isn't trusting God to meet our expectations. True faith trusts God to accomplish our eternal best in spite of 'em.**

Pain and suffering aren't even the real issue. It's the fear and confusion that gets us. We can withstand almost any affliction if it makes sense as an act of love and sacrifice: a soldier throwing himself on a grenade; a mother running into a home engulfed in flames.

But, **fear and confusion come from unmet expectations.** And, **unmet expectations come from misunderstanding God.** And, **misunderstanding comes from a lack of knowledge of His Word.**

When we're disappointed by people or circumstances we can run to God. But, where do you run when *God* lets you down? *His Word*.

My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. – Hosea 4:6a NIV

So many have angrily resisted for so long, because **He failed to meet their expectations, and they failed to pursue His reasons.** Instead of seeking to realign *their* narrow mind by *His Word*, they continue to hold *Him* accountable to their skewed view. It is the height of arrogance to judge and convict the Creator, without examining *all* the evidence, or listening to His side.

John isn't quitting; he's recalibrating his expectations by asking questions concerning the Scriptures; specifically Malachi 3.

When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, '**Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?**'" At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man **who does not fall away on account of me.**" – Luke 7:20-23 NIV

When would *anyone* fall away *on account* of *Jesus*? When He's not what they expect. And, they refuse to adjust their expectations.

Jesus and John are conversing in a foreign tongue. Not Greek. Not Aramaic. Not Hebrew. **The language of the Lord is Scripture.** John believed he himself was the "messenger" of Isaiah 40. But, Jesus isn't acting like the "flame-thrower" of Malachi 3. However, Malachi is a summarization what Isaiah depicts in great detail throughout his book.

In fact, the Gospel of Mark opens by saying:

It is written in Isaiah the prophet: [and then quotes Malachi 3:1] **“I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way”** [What Malachi summarizes with *symbolism* was first written about in more detail in Isaiah; for instance, Isaiah 40:3 says] **“a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”** – Mark 1:2-3 NIV

Jesus told John (in their foreign tongue) to check out Isaiah chapter 35; it connects directly to the messenger of Isaiah 40, and defines what Malachi summarizes with symbols. Isaiah says:

Do not fear; **your God will come**, he **will come** with *vengeance*; with *divine retribution* he **will come** to save you.” [But, *not how you expect*] Then will the eyes of the *blind* be opened and the ears of the *deaf* unstopped. Then will the *lame* leap like a deer, and the *mute tongue* shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the *desert*. – Isaiah 35:4b-6 NIV

And, leave it to Jesus to really get to the heart of the matter.

As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the *desert* to see? [We’ll discuss this next week; but, watch how Jesus gets to the deeper question under John’s question] ... A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: [in Malachi 3:1] ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ ... And if you are willing to accept it he is the Elijah [of Malachi 4:5] who was to come. – Mt 11:7, 14; Lk 7:27 NIV

John sent his messengers to ask if Jesus was the One who was to come, and Jesus strengthens his faith by connecting Isaiah 35. But, there’s something deeper here: **if Jesus isn’t the One to come, then John wasn’t the one to come before the One to come**. In that prison cell, he’s got a wonder if it was all a waste. So, Jesus says that John is “the one” “who was to come” (before Him).

I suspect John feared what we all do when Jesus disappoints us. Did I get it wrong?

Is He not the One we think He is?

No. He’s not. But, that’s good. Because, we’re ready to settle for far too little.

So, who can endure his coming? Who can stand? Those who lean not on their own expectations, but trust in the Lord to recalibrate their hearts and minds according to His Word.

Like John, in prison, awaiting his fate and receiving clarity from Jesus, and with it a recharging of love that drives out fear. Like a soldier facing a grenade. Or, a mom in those fiery flames.

Then, whether death, divorce, addiction, illness, custody, bankruptcy, or prison, *you* will be able to endure and to even stand and say:

Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him ... – Job 13:15 NIV

Which was, undoubtedly, the final conclusion of John.