

Article of the Month  
June, 2021

***Expectations***

There is such a thing as absolute truth. (John 17:17) Unfortunately, all of us get information in the form of a mixture — part truth, part error, part supposition or speculation. That will all be rectified in the Peaceable Kingdom when “the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:9; Jeremiah 31:34) But meanwhile, it is wise for us all to realize the limitations which our imperfections place on us. We want to and can search for truths (on many subjects), but, at the same time, if we are honest with self, we must not trust that we are capable of always separating wheat from chaff! Our personal preferences and our EXPECTATIONS affect the outcome.

Those who put their trust in the truths revealed in Scripture, and who are led by the holy spirit’s influences, have an advantage. This is not to say that we can always understand the Word of the Lord without flaws in our thinking. But, because the source is pure, the truths are also pure in the Bible; they are not adulterated with errors, and delusions, and deceptions, and false expectations. The more we rely on its consistent and contradiction-free testimony, and the more we take self with its preferences and expectations out of the equation, the more we will have of truth without error. But here is the reason for our title: EXPECTATIONS can color our thinking.

What we EXPECT (for any reason) affects our thinking, our receiving of information, and our reactions. The Apostle Paul knew that our thinking can be taken hostage. He writes in II Corinthians 11:3, “But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity in Christ.”

What Paul means is important. No one could ever accuse Scripture of being simple! It is quite complex in doctrine, prophecy, and even in behavioral standards. And, surely, Paul would not want us to ignore any of it or its complexities. But our approach to it all is where Paul wants us to exercise care. He wants us to have a simplicity of character — innocence instead of suspicions, preferences, and preconceptions. Eve was deceived BECAUSE she lacked faith in what God had said. But she was deceived BY cunningly worded errors and fears from an outside source. Jesus informs us that Eve’s experience was the very beginning of an ever-since culture of lies. (John 8:44) We are foolish, indeed, if we think we are exempt from such lies — or if we think we are always capable of even discerning them! That is the reason why Paul “feared” that complex and

subtle lies would lead our minds astray. We ARE subject to the influences of misinformation; and they color what we EXPECT and how we perceive nearly everything.

The modern world has given most of us access to droves of information sources. And many of us are gullible as to what is being presented. Scriptures and Scriptural standards SHOULD give us some kind of filtering mechanism as a protection. But our humanity often negates this filtering system. We must face the fact that we “fall for” all kinds of sophistries. We are too ready to “buy” what we hear on the internet, on social media, on “Twitter,” on certain broadcast networks, or from our trusted friends. SUSPICION is being sown wholesale. And suspicion is poisonous! And, for some reason, humanity seems to LIKE suspicion! Thus we EXPECT the worst! And our EXPECTATIONS close our minds to rationality and, worse yet, they make our minds THINK that we’re on the “inside track” of information. We are “sitting ducks” for Satan’s barrage of lies!

We learn from II Thessalonians 2:9-12 that OUR day is particularly susceptible to the deceptions of Satan. We also learn that God is going to USE this culture of lying as a tool of His in bringing down this old world. (That’s GOOD news!) And it is working because people have not received a “love of truth,” but rather take pleasure in wickedness (believing it to be the truth).

Conspiracy theories are only one of the modern-era vehicles designed to keep us off balance and to lead us away from “the simplicity which is in Christ.” We all should know that EVERY conspiracy theory out there creates suspicion. And a suspicious mind is not only ready to doubt man and facts, but it is ready to doubt God also.

These theories are all designed to make us EXPECT and believe the worst. It is interesting that, even in the religious world, people have always seemed to focus on some terrible “they’ll-be-out-to-get-us” frame of mind. (Habakkuk 3:16) It’s also in the political and social worlds. That is NOT the frame of mind a Christian should have! Nor is this the focus of Scripture as far as end-time prophecy is concerned. Scripture DOES foretell trouble before the Peaceable Kingdom settles in. But that trouble is aimed against this world’s state of things (suspicion included) and against false religion, NOT against followers of Christ! And such things as conspiracy theories HELP to insure the coming trouble by turning every man against his neighbor. (Isaiah 19:2) But the trouble on society is because God is making the old world pass away by the symbolic “fire” of man’s wrath at the end of this age. The Apostle Peter explains this in II Peter 3:7-13. And his focus is the “new heavens and new earth” in which righteousness will dwell. The old heavens (rulerships & religious powers) and the old earth (man’s social structure) ARE passing before our eyes. A clear and informed and spiritual mind will say, “Good riddance!” Other minds will say, “Woe! Woe!” It is all a matter of EXPECTATIONS and preferences.

For those with the EXPECTATIONS of the Kingdom, these traumas are not personally significant! For those, however, with EXPECTATIONS of being cheated, defrauded, hurt, robbed, and tricked, now is a terrible time! Can we see how two basically different sets of EXPECTATIONS based on the same events color everything we look at?

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR US IN OUR LIVES?

What we expect and why we expect it can mean nearly everything to us as we go through life. EXPECTATIONS are built on what we have been taught to believe.

If, for instance, we approach the Bible with a view to finding in it what we EXPECT to find, it is likely that we will totally miss its messages. When we approach the Word of the Lord, we must believe that it is just that — God's Word. It is something which He has spoken and which, therefore, should be outstandingly good — not full of fear and forebodings! If, however, we approach it with only what we have been told to expect, we will color everything we read in order to have it bend to our preconceptions.

If the Bible is God's Word, we should not have expectations that it will be simple. After all, it is written by the direction of the Highest Being in the universe! Among other things, it, itself, reveals that it is complicated BECAUSE at this time God wants to hide things from the insincere until it is time to deal with them generously. (Matthew 11:25, 26; 13:10, 11) But He also wants great truths to be available to those who are willing to lay aside preconceptions and to study with the greatest sincerity possible.

Study of Scripture will take time, energy, prayer, and the sincere desire to be taught. We will have to honestly consider (1) context. We will have to be willing (2) to study topically — searching ALL the Bible has to say on a given subject. (Luke 24:25) We will not be able simply to find a verse we like and build an entire faith on it. (3) We will need to have faith in the source. "He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6) (4) We must be willing to realize that the Bible covers an enormous expanse of time — of varying parts and purposes in the Divine Plan. Therefore, all Scripture does not apply at all times. (II Timothy 2:15) Some truths are dispensational, and they simply do not apply to all peoples at all times. This is for good reason. It is not because truth changes, but because God is not always trying to accomplish the same thing! He has timing and steps of progress designed into His purposes. (5) We must be willing to learn that some things were done in order to be pictures of things to come. Scripture calls these "types" and "allegories." For instance, the Passover Lamb of Israel's deliverance from Egypt was a picture and a prophecy of Jesus (the "Lamb of God" — I Corinthians 5:7) who will deliver the entire race from its slavery to sin and death. (6) We will come to have new EXPECTATIONS because the Bible is a great time-keeper, and its chronology helps us to know where we are on the stream of time as related to God's intention for setting up His Kingdom on earth.

All of this sounds exhausting! But this approach will have the Bible create our EXPECTATIONS, not have us interpret the Bible by our own expectations! Those who love truth, and who consequently love God, will not find this a burden! They will find it a joy and an energy producer — not an energy-sapping exercise. And sharing the results of all of this study with others who love it just as much as we do, is one of the great delights of a Christian's experience. Fellowship in truth is a stimulant. It gives health to the whole being!

What does this do regarding our EXPECTATIONS of things in the world about us? If we are consumers of tainted news, gossip, conspiracies, rumors, preferences, suspicions, hate, and general negativism, we will EXPECT the worst of nearly everyone. That attitude is becoming prevalent! And we all know it is at best UNCOMFORTABLE. But it is worse than uncomfortable; it eats like acid at the very core of our souls.

To put it bluntly, there is not, and cannot be, any fellowship of light with darkness. There cannot be a Christian who is also a skeptic and an accuser. Either we do or we do not learn and accept the wonderful things on mankind's horizon. If we do accept these beauties, there is nothing that can take our rest from us. We will rest in faith; we will "enter God's rest." (Hebrews 4) If, on the other hand, we feed ourselves with the concerns and suspicions of an uninformed and faithless people, we will share their terrors.

One Scripture stands out strongly in all of this discussion. It is Psalm 76:10. (KJV is best.) ***"Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee; the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."*** What a promise! What stability it gives! No matter what kind of anger and confusion man is experiencing and practicing, it WILL end up praising God and the plan He has put into place for mankind's future! And, no matter how terrible a situation man might create, this text promises that God WILL restrain it if it goes too far — if it will not help the establishment of the Kingdom, and if it will harm the long-term good of any individual. How can faith falter with that kind of assurance?

If our EXPECTATIONS come from preferences, from worldly information sources, from anything other than the only pure source, we will be, at best, miserable, but, unfortunately, also dangerous to our friends and our society. If our EXPECTATIONS come from the only infallible source, we will be at rest and at peace. Which would YOU choose?

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