

The Gospel According to
Luke

“What Do You Expect?”
Chapter 3:15-38

Introduction

“What do you expect when you come to Church?”

Your expectation will often determine whether or not a particular Church service is meaningful to you.

In our text we read, “**the people were in expectation...**” John the Baptist had been telling them that Jesus was coming. It was their constant expectation that Jesus would be present among them.

We should have the same expectation. In two familiar passages, Jesus Himself indicated that **our** expectation should be that He would be present among us:

1. In a passage describing the power and authority present in the meetings of His Church, Jesus said, “**For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them**” (Matthew 18:20).
2. In the last book of the Bible, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the Lord described Himself as “**walking in the midst**” of the Church as it assembles (Revelation 2:1).

We should expect Jesus to be present among us; we should expect Him to make His presence known.

“**The people**” listening to John the Baptist “**were in expectation.**” As a result, two things happened: *Hearts* were opened, and *heaven* was opened.

We’ll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 When You’re Expecting Jesus To Come Hearts Are Opened, and #2 When You’re Expecting Jesus To Come Heaven Is Opened.

#1 When You're Expecting Jesus To Come
Hearts Are Opened
(v15-20)

Jesus is God. He is therefore omnipresent – present everywhere at once. I understand that when we gather we don't need to figure out how to get Him to 'come' to Church. He's already there, already here.

Still, it was Jesus Who reminded us that He would be present among us in a special way when we gather together. We need reminding. Unless we meet Jesus in our service, none of our other expectations will be met.

We want to glean a few insights from the scene at the Jordan River. We can identify several factors that contribute to a sense of expectation.

The first thing that contributes to a sense of expectation is **Preaching** about Jesus:

Luke 3:15 Now as the people were in expectation...

Previously we learned that John considered himself nothing more than "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." His strong preaching about Jesus built a sense of expectation.

Jesus should always be the main subject running through all our messages. It is all too possible to ignore the Lord even when teaching the Bible. A lot of preaching sounds biblical, but it ignores the nature and character of God. For example: It puts burdens on you when Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Or you might be told that God's love does not extend to the whole human race, but only to a chosen few.

Next, **Pointing** to Jesus contributes to a sense of expectation:

Luke 3:15 Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not,

Luke 3:16 John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but

One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose...

We should cut these folks some slack: We have a lot more revelation than these people had and we are often confused!

Often a disciple would become the servant of his teacher. Even a disciple would not stoop to taking-off the sandals of his teacher and washing his feet. But John said that the difference between him and Jesus was so great he was not even worthy to be considered for such a task!

John pointed *away* from himself and *at* Jesus. Pointing at Jesus means losing yourself. You can have no ambition, no attitude, no activity in your life that would be an obstacle or a hindrance to people seeing Jesus in your serving Him.

Next, emphasizing the **Power** of Jesus contributes to a sense of expectation:

Luke 3:16 John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John was a servant whose only task was to "baptize with water." The Lord was the "One mightier" they should focus upon.

Where is the emphasis in these verses? Is it on the power of the Holy Spirit? Or on the power of Jesus?

If you answered, "Jesus," *you are right*. Jesus is the baptizer with the Holy Spirit. The emphasis is on Jesus.

What is this particular baptism "with the Holy Spirit and fire"? Here, in this passage, what is meant is explained in verse seventeen:

Luke 3:17 His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

John used an agricultural image to explain Jesus' two-fold baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. A farmer took a large fork-shaped shovel

and tossed grain into the air. The heavy grain fell to the threshing floor to be gathered. The lighter chaff flew away in the breeze and had to be swept up and burned.

Just so, Jesus divides people into two groups: Those who receive Him and are given His Holy Spirit to indwell them, and those who reject Him and will be burning forever in the fire of Hell.

If you are preaching Jesus and pointing to Jesus, people will be confronted with His power to save them for eternity. And they will understand the awful alternative.

[Luke 3:18](#) And with many other exhortations he preached to the people.

When talking to believers, you should emphasize Jesus' power to 'save' them. They're already saved for eternity; but they need to go on experiencing the benefits and blessings of salvation. Talk about what God has done; about His sufficient grace for all their circumstances.

Next, emphasizing the **Purity** of Jesus contributes to a sense of expectation:

[Luke 3:19](#) But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,

Herodias had been married to Herod's half-brother, Philip. She was thus Herod's wife, sister-in-law, and niece all at the same time. There were many other "[evils which Herod had done.](#)"

John was able to rebuke Herod because he kept himself in a place of purity in his walk with God. Your sense of expectation of meeting with Jesus will be greatly hindered if you are ignoring His commands and demands for personal purity in your daily life.

Finally, we learn from John to expect **Persecution**:

[Luke 3:20](#) also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.

Herod imprisoned John; ultimately, he would have John beheaded. You need an honest awareness of persecution, affliction, adversity,

hardship, and suffering. If you only expect Jesus to allow safe, comfortable, healthy, wealthy things in your life, you are not going to be able to maintain a sense of expectation.

Jesus is everywhere present; but He has promised to manifest His presence, to make Himself known, in our meetings.

How do we know if we've met with the Lord? Often the presence of God is gauged according to how many, or how wild, the manifestations of the Spirit were in a meeting. I respect Pentecostal Churches for their emphasis on the presence of God in their midst. They often have a sense of expectation that conservative Churches lack. Sadly, it isn't Jesus they emphasize, but the Holy Spirit. It is the gifts of the Spirit that they settle for. Even Paul the Apostle said that there was no value in an outburst of speaking in tongues by the entire congregation if no one knew what was being said. The Holy Spirit only always speaks about Jesus.

How do we know if we've met with the Lord? It's not necessarily an outward experience, something you can see. Your heart will be touched – opened to the things of God. If it sounds mystical, it's not; but it is personal and intimate. It's like trying to define romance – it can't be defined, but you understand what it is.

After He rose from the dead, Jesus appeared to two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus. After they're encounter with the risen Lord, they said,

Luke 24:32 ...“Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”

How do we know if we've met with the Lord? All I can say is, *You'll know!* The closest description I can give is one we sometimes sing:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace*

#2 When You're Expecting Jesus To Come Heaven Is Opened (v21-38)

Jesus came to where John was baptizing:

Luke 3:21 When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened.

Luke 3:22 And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

Jesus did not need to be baptized for repentance and the remission of sins. He was the perfect, sinless Savior. Why, then, did He come to be baptized?

It was to identify with the human race, to place Himself among us so we would understand He was here to represent us.

This idea of representation is extremely important to your understanding of sin and salvation. Listen to these selected verses from First Corinthians and Romans:

1 Corinthians 15:45 And so it is written, "*The first man Adam became a living being.*" The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:47 The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven.

Romans 5:14 ...death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Romans 5:17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

Adam was the first man. In the Garden of Eden he represented the entire human race. He sinned and sin passes down to all of his descendants.

Jesus, "*the Lord from heaven,*" is called "*the second Man.*" He, too, represented us. The difference is that Jesus successfully resisted

Satan. He became the leader of a new creation, all those who receive Him as their Savior and are born-again.

Jesus' identification in order to represent us is brought out in the particular genealogy Luke used. I should mention that this genealogy differs from the one given in Matthew's Gospel. There are several explanations for the differences. The most common is that Matthew gives Jesus' genealogy through Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, while Luke's is the genealogy of Mary, the actual line of Jesus.

What is important for us is at the end of verse thirty-eight,

Luke 3:38 ...the son of Adam, the son of God.

Adam was the "son of God" in the sense he was made in the image and likeness of God. Jesus was "the son of Adam" in the sense that He was fully human – only we know from previous studies that He was miraculously conceived and therefore without sin. Calling Jesus "the son of Adam, the son of God," cements this principle that Jesus came to represent the human race as the second man, the second Adam.

His representation is important. In Second Corinthians 5:21 you read,

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

As your representative, Jesus can take upon Himself your sin and its penalty and punishment and, in its place, give you His perfect "righteousness." Let me put it this way: You may object to being represented by Adam and declared a sinner, but because of this principle of representation, you can be represented by Jesus and be declared righteous.

Luke 3:23 Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli,

Jews considered you a full son of Abraham at age thirteen; but you weren't considered mature until age thirty!

We've seen the doctrinal importance of the baptism of Jesus. I want to suggest its devotional importance.

I love the phrase, "the heaven was opened." Jesus saw it; John saw it; we're not sure if everyone else did, **but we see it!**

What might it mean to see "the heaven opened" to you as we gather together? Let me suggest three things, based upon the three members of the Trinity:

1. First, Luke is the only Gospel writer who mentions that Jesus was praying. Do you know Jesus prays for you all the time? And that God must answer His prayers? "The heaven is opened" to you because Jesus prays for you.
2. Second, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus. It is a reminder that He is the giver of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that, once He ascended to heaven, He would give the Holy Spirit to His disciples. The figure of the "dove" reminds you of the gentleness and intimacy of the Holy Spirit in your heart. "The heaven is opened" to you because you receive God the Holy Spirit.
3. Third, the Father spoke from heaven, approving His Son. The Father declared He was "pleased" in retrospect, as He reviewed Jesus' thirty years on the earth. All Jesus had done was grown in wisdom and stature by being obedient. No miracles; no mighty deeds. It reminds you that God wants to have fellowship with you; it pleases Him to simply talk with you. "The heaven is opened" to you because you converse with your Father.

Conclusion

Think of some possible expectations for a moment:

1. You might come expecting to learn something new from God's Word; thus you are focused on the message.
2. You might come expecting to participate in inspired worship; thus you are focused on the music.
3. You might come expecting to have a need in your life met; thus you are focused on the fellowship of the saints.
4. You might come expecting the person you brought with you to receive Christ; thus you are focused on the altar call.

We could go on and on. There are as many expectations as there are people; and I'd add to that the fact that our expectations change from time to time, even from week to week.

You should expect Jesus to come when you come to Church. He promised you He'd be there. The message, the music, and the members are present only to point each and every individual heart to Jesus. When you expect to meet with Him, all your other expectations will be met.