

# “DIVINE EXPECTATIONS”

## Matthew 5:17-20

Our expectations can be irrational from time to time...

- We lie and expect that no one will ever know.
- We overindulge in food and expect to feel good.
- We take what is not ours and expect no consequences.
- We give in to temptation and expect to still be blessed.
- We act selfishly and expect others to treat us with respect.
- We ignore repentance and expect forgiveness.

The fact of the matter is this—*God has some real and defined expectations for all who would follow the Lord Jesus Christ.* In our study of the Sermon on the Mount, we have already discovered what Jesus expects concerning our character and our impact on the culture around us. Tonight, we come to passage that reveals God’s plan for making those expectations a reality in our day-to-day lives. Here are three powerful expectations.

### 1. BELIEVE THE BIBLE.

What did Jesus believe about the Bible? Well, just look how He used it. When He encountered the devil in a time of unbelievable temptation, He referred the Word of God three consecutive times (**Luke 4:1-13**). When He began His formal ministry, He entered the synagogue in Nazareth, took the scroll of Isaiah and read from (**Luke 4:14-21**). He said that nobody would ever believe in Him without believing the words of Moses.

**John 5:39,45-47**... “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; **45** “Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. **46** “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. **47** “But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

Is there an absolute basis for truth, for law, for morals, for right and wrong; and if so, what is it? Those questions are the essence of what Jesus teaches in Matthew 5:17–20.<sup>1</sup> One thing is for sure. No one hearing Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount could doubt His commitment to the Scriptures.

### **A.) Jesus taught that the Bible is authoritative.**

When He referred to the Law and Prophets, He was referring to the Old Testament.

**Matthew 5:17...** “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

How did Jesus fulfill the Law (The Torah or the first five books of the Old Testament)?

- **In His teaching ministry, He taught people to obey the Law (Mark 1:40-44).**
- **In living a perfect life, Jesus fulfilled the moral law. (1 Peter 2:22; John 8:46)**
- **In His sacrificial death, Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial law.**

Christ came not to destroy the old religious system but to fulfill the Old Covenant and then to establish the New Covenant.

How did Jesus fulfill the Prophets? There are many great prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament. Let's look at a few of them...

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [Matthew](#), vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985–1989), 250.

**Genesis 3:15**... And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.

**Isaiah 53:4–6**... Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. **5** But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. **6** All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

**Daniel 7:13–14**... “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. **14** “And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Do you see how the theme of God’s inspired Word is the Lord Jesus Christ from beginning to end?

### **B.) Jesus taught that the Bible is abiding.**

**Matthew 5:18**... “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

Look at verse 18. As long as heaven and earth exist, the Word of God will remain and it will still be relevant.

**Psalms 119:89**... Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.

**Isaiah 40:8**... The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

Notice that He viewed the Law as being inspired even in its smallest parts—“*the jot and the tittle*.” Do you believe the Bible is God breathed (divine inspiration)? Paul certainly did...

**2 Timothy 3:16–17...** All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; **17** so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

What does this mean for you as Christ's follower? You cannot say...

- "I like the New Testament but I reject the Old Testament."
- "I like the parables but I detest the references to the blood of Christ."
- "I like prophecy but I do not accept the moral teachings of Jesus."
- "I focus only on the words of Jesus, not the words of Paul."

What did Jesus believe about the Bible? He believed it was authoritative and abiding. How can we claim to be His followers and not have the same view of Scripture? Listen...

God expects you to **believe the Bible!** Secondly, He expects you to...

## **2. TREASURE THE TRUTH.**

God has some serious expectations when it comes to not only what we believe about the Bible but also how we respond to the Bible. So how do we treasure the truth?

### **A.) In our submission to the Word**

**Matthew 5:19...** "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Notice Jesus warned against those who "annul" even the least of the commandments. The word "annul" means to compromise and strip down the requirements of God for our lives. John MacArthur wrote...

**When a Christian ceases to obey God's Word in even the slightest degree, to that degree he is being unChristlike, because that is something Christ refused to do.**

So, we treasure the truth by submitting to the Word! We also treasure the truth...

### **B.) In our service to the Lord**

Notice the blessing that is given to the believer who *"keeps and teaches them."* As we serve our Lord in whatever capacity we are gifted in, we have a golden opportunity to emphasize to believers and nonbelievers alike that we treasure the truth (teaching, counseling, encouraging, etc.)

So, let me ask you, do you treasure the truth? If you do, you will receive great blessings not only in this life but also in heaven!

**God expects you to believe the Bible! Secondly, He expects you to treasure the truth. Finally, He expects you to...**

## **3. SEEK THE SAVIOR.**

**Matthew 5:20...** "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

In this verse, we are reminded that the Lord Jesus Christ provides our only hope of being received into heaven. In this matter of seeking the Savior, I want you to see...

### **A.) The Lord's correction**

The Jews had a saying, *"If two people will go to heaven, one will be a Pharisee and the other will be a Scribe."* Jesus' words cut like a two-edged sword against the grain of the day. He pointed out how empty the religion of the Scribes and Pharisees really were. Their righteousness was an external righteousness (**Matthew 15:1-9**). God is looking for internal righteousness.

Listen, you can clean up your life to a degree. An alcoholic can get off the bottle. A drug addict can beat his/her addiction. A lazy man can get a job. But one thing you can't do is change your heart!

Jesus said that our righteousness must "surpass" that of the most religious of all people. The word for "surpass" refers to a river overflowing its banks.

### **B.) The Lord's caution**

Jesus said, "***You shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.***" You can pile up tons of good works and religious activities, but no matter how hard you try you cannot attain God's standard of perfection. You see as you read the Sermon on the Mount, you should be driven to seek the Savior.

**Matthew 7:21–23...** "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. **22** "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' **23** "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

**Philippians 3:2–11...** Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; **3** for we are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, **4** although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: **5** circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; **6** as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. **7** But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. **8** More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, **9** and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, **10** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; **11** in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

The Lord Jesus is the only One who can provide the righteousness you need to get you into heaven!

**2 Corinthians 5:21...** He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Yes, God has some very real expectations for each of us. So let me ask you today...

**Do you believe the Bible?**

Do you have the same high view of Scripture the Lord Jesus had? Turn from the poisoning influence of the world and with Jesus believe the Word of God is authoritative and abiding.

**Do you treasure the truth?**

Can you say right now that you are submitting to the Word in your life? Are you willing today to commit yourself to fresh obedience in every area of your life? Furthermore, will you serve the Lord by emphasizing the truth of the Word?

**Are you seeking the Savior?**

The whole Bible is about Jesus! Come to Christ today in saving faith and repentance. He will give you His righteousness—a righteousness that will change your heart and get you all the way to heaven!