

Jesus - expect the unexpected

PART ONE - THE JEWISH MESSIAH

What were the expectations of the Jewish people? Who did they expect to be their Messiah?

Isaiah 7:14 The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel^[d]—which means, "God with us."

So began a whole string of events that drew a patchwork of prophecies from the OT together, many of them from Isaiah, to form the picture of the Messiah, the saving one of Israel and ultimately the world.

With the benefit of hindsight we can look back in reverse and see how all these scriptures all fit together to make a picture of the Messiah that Jesus fits.

But it wasn't that way for the people on the receiving end.

From Matthew

²When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples ³to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

⁴Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy^[b] are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. ⁶Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

²²Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴but the boat was already a considerable distance^[a] from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

14: ²⁵During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

²⁸"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

²⁹"Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

³²And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

16: ¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ,^[b] the Son of the living God."

¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, ^[c] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades ^[d] will not overcome it. ^[e] ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be ^[f] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be ^[g] loosed in heaven." ²⁰Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

21: ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna ^[b] to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" ^[c]

"Hosanna ^[d] in the highest!"

¹⁰When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

²³Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"

What was the expectation of the Jewish messiah?

There isn't a specific piece of text that says 'this is what the messiah will be like'. We have to draw on a mixture of scripture, how it was interpreted, culture and the Talmud (the Jewish writings in addition to what we have as the OT).

In Jesus' time 'Jewish pride' was experiencing somewhat of a revival. Names like Mary (Miriam), Joseph and Joshua (Jesus in Hebrew) were common. Jewish customs were being followed - Jesus was circumcised on the 8th day and they all went to Jerusalem for Passover, so these traditions were being kept faithfully.

And the prophets did speak of a coming king, and they believed that he would bring peace.

Change was in the air.

The Qumran community - the people responsible for the Dead Sea scrolls - set a place at the table each mealtime, ready for the coming of the Messiah.

Pseudo-messiahs had been popping up with increasing regularity, leading rebellions only to be brutally crushed by the Romans. For example the 'prophet' known as the Egyptian got lots of people to follow him and him and 4000 followers were eventually killed by the Romans in the wilderness outside Jerusalem.

The Roman poet Virgil coined the phrase 'a new order of the ages' and William Barclay wrote 'It is the simple historical fact that in the thirty years from 67 to 37 BC ... no fewer than 150,000 men perished in Palestine in revolutionary uprisings. There was no more explosive and inflammable country in the world.'

But with Herod the Great came a brutal oppression from the Romans to quash this unrest and sort the place out.

In fact some of the Pharisees expected Jesus to go the same way and wanted to leave him to it on those grounds.

People flocked to John the Baptist, possibly with the same hope, and he had to tell them that he wasn't the messiah but one was coming after him whose sandals he was not fit to untie.

'Are you the one?' seems to be a question of the age.

More than ever the Jewish people were crying out for a Messiah. **What did they expect him to look like?**

Descendant of David - well Jesus was, but they associated a lot of stuff with being a descendant of David - the most revered OT King.

Powerful - Isaiah 64:1 Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!

Deliverer - p41 'Breakthrough' (Derek Morphey)

If you are under an oppressive, secular, immoral rule and illegal occupation, how would you feel? You have been taught that The One is coming who will release you and your country from this oppression.

- ◇ Either you can acquiesce to the illegal oppressive evil occupation of the Romans
- ◇ Or you can anticipate the Kingdom of God - the Messiah.

Perhaps this will explain how as time passed the build up of expectation was such that some writings said that when the Messiah came each bunch of grapes will hold 100 clusters of grapes, and each cluster will have 1000 grapes. Every woman would bear 100 children. And there were the false messiahs.

The clamour for a Messiah was beginning to die down by the 1st century, partly tiredness and partly the cranking up of the Roman law to stamp out the difficult Jews once and for all.

That is the mixture of feeling, religion, hope and disillusionment that Jesus came into.

What a peculiar time and place for God to send us his only son. And we know that the Kingdom only came in part, and that the scriptures were only fulfilled in part, that the great and glorious day of the Lord hasn't come yet.

Or do we?

What they got in Jesus wasn't what they were looking for. Do we, in Jesus, get what we are looking for, or what we feel we need, or deserve.

Perhaps you feel just how the Israelites felt, under Roman occupation and desperate for deliverance. People all around you talk of the Messiah who has come to take it all away **Isaiah 64:1 Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!** And he hasn't, and the triumphal theology being spoken all around just doesn't fit with your experience.

PART TWO - OUR MESSIAH

Read Mark 8:27-38

Matt 13 ⁴⁴"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Point 1 - we all have worldviews. What is your worldview? When you look for the Messiah, what lenses are you looking through?

- lots of people who were not prepared to lay down their existing world views and be surprised missed Jesus when he eventually turned up.
- We don't want to repeat that do we?
- Or do we, like the first century Jews, think we have it nailed? Are we confident that the church has it sorted, or are we prepared to lay it all down and look again with fresh eyes, listen with fresh ears, to who Jesus is and what he's up to right now?

Point 2 - Jesus shocked people 2000 years ago.

Did Jesus fulfil the hopes and expectations of the average first century Jew??

Yes - he did in that ultimately

- ◇ he will (and does) bring peace to the earth
- ◇ he will (and does) bring deliverance
- ◇ he will (and does) bring salvation *for all* as Paul said 'you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'

No

- in that it wasn't political peace and deliverance the messiah brought
- some of the expectations drawn from the prophets have only partially been fulfilled
 - when the messiah returns a 2nd time to judge the living and the dead - the great and glorious day of the Lord Joel spoke about - then all prophecies, hopes and expectations (Godly ones anyway) will be fulfilled completely.
- He didn't look, act or speak the way they expected him (wanted him?) to. In fact sometimes he seemed to go deliberately out of his way to put them off.

Jesus being deliberately contrary? Well consider these incidents.

- 1 Feeding the 5000, crowds follow, they want more, he sidetracks them into talk about resurrection and his own body and blood. They leave.
- 2 On the Sabbath takes disciples into the fields and picks corn.
- 3 Says 'before Abraham was born I am'

I think there are more, and I think that Jesus was deliberately provocative. Read the gospels and see for yourself - make your own mind up.

Shocking 1 My thesis is this - Jesus offended people's minds to reveal their hearts.

Luke 2: ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Shocking 2 He shocked, not just for shocking's sake, but he needed to break through. The parable of the good Samaritan was just that - he was revealing people's prejudice's to expose their need for redemption.

Shocking 3 He said seek and you shall find - it implies that we will need to search.

Matt 13 ⁴⁴"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

It is clear from the people who ended up crucifying him that Jesus was not what people expected and that they didn't get what they wanted. This can be mixed in with 400 years of pain, disappointment, personal and national difficulties. But to those who had eyes to see, ears to hear, he did ultimately fulfil the promise of the messiah. Try telling that to the disciples on Good Friday, or just before Pentecost, and they may not have believed you, but how about afterwards? They will see that

- ◇ he did (and does) bring peace to the earth
- ◇ he did (and does) bring deliverance
- ◇ he did (and does) bring salvation *for all*

and more

- his way was the long way, the eternal way. Through relationship, healing, forgiveness. And although the immediate needs of the people weren't met, the universal salvation of the earth came through Jesus.

It's such a bigger picture. For them and for us. He gave us pictures of this - the wind and the waves being calmed, the feeding of the 5000, the dead being raised and the blind seeing. But we failed to see past the getting across the water safely, the full bellies, and our brother being with us for a few more years.

Another storm would come, we would get hungry again, Lazarus would die. BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD LASTS FOREVER.

We are part of a much bigger story than just the next few years, even our life spans. We are part of a universal salvation of the whole world. God who created the world and holds it together by his very energy, chooses to involve us in this great salvation plan and we are privileged to be part of it. It is woven into our circumstances and sometimes the Kingdom of the future breaks through into the present, just as it was doing when Jesus announced 'The Kingdom is here'.

We are living breathing representatives of the glorious Kingdom of God, Jesus' light on earth. Let us embrace the light of life and everything God has for us.

We finished by reading the scriptures 1 Peter 1 and Philippians 3, followed by an exercise, a transaction, whereby we wrote down on a piece of paper a hurt, disappointment, unmet expectation, unrealised dream, or anything that caused the pain of disillusionment and frustration. In return we returned to our seats with renewed hope and a resolve to trust in God with the attitude of David surrounded by enemies, holed out in a cave 'yet will I trust you oh Lord my God'. This was symbolised by taking a stone from the bowl and a clean piece of paper. On this we asked the Holy Spirit for a verse to accompany the stone - write it out and pin it up somewhere. Remember it throughout the week and feed on it.