

## **“Questions of Expectation Concerning Christ’s Coming”**

(Matthew 11:2-11 – Advent 3 – December 14, 2025)

Matthew 11:2-11 – <sup>2</sup>*And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples <sup>3</sup>and said to Him, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?” <sup>4</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: <sup>5</sup>The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. <sup>6</sup>And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” <sup>7</sup>As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? <sup>8</sup>But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. <sup>9</sup>But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup>For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’ <sup>11</sup>Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”*

Dear Redeemed in the name of Jesus Christ, the Savior who has come:

What do you expect for Christmas? Are you eagerly waiting to open that certain present, hoping to find just the gift you wanted? Are you looking forward to that gathering of family and friends, hoping for a wonderful time together? It is great to enjoy such gifts God gives us. But at times we can be disappointed if our expectations are not fulfilled, if we do not get the gift we wanted, or we are not able to have the experience we hoped for.

But when our expectations for Christmas are Christ-centered, we cannot be disappointed. How can we be disappointed, when we see the love of God in giving us the greatest gift of His Son who was born as our Savior? How can we be disappointed when we hear the good news that by Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, He has taken away all our sins, reconciled us to God in peace, and won for us a place in His heavenly Kingdom?

This Advent season, let us examine our expectations as we prepare to celebrate Jesus’ first coming to win our salvation, and as we await His second coming to bring all His family of believers to His wonderful home in heaven. Let us consider **“Questions of Expectation Concerning Christ’s Coming.”** In our text, we hear: **1) John’s question concerning the work of Jesus, and 2) Jesus’ question concerning the message of John.**

### **1) John’s question concerning the work of Jesus**

As the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist had faithfully fulfilled his calling. He prepared sinners’ hearts to receive their Savior, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins in His name (Mark 1:4). When Jesus came forth publicly, John declared:

*“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). He pointed penitent sinners to Jesus as the one bringing salvation and deliverance to His people.

At the same time, the prophecies spoke of judgment on the wicked at Christ’s coming. So John warned the impenitent: *“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.... Even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”* (Matthew 3:8, 10).

But as a result of his faithful preaching, John had been stuck in prison for some time. His calling as the forerunner of Christ seemed to be coming to an anti-climactic end. As he heard about the work Jesus was doing, it was not what he expected. All he heard was Jesus’ emphasis on grace and healing. Where was the judgment aspect of His coming? Where was the great deliverance for God’s people? Did his languishing in prison mean he was missing out on the blessings of Christ’s coming Kingdom? Was it because of some personal sin and failure in his calling? Surely the long hours in a dark prison could bring depression, doubt, and disappointment even to such a solid preacher as John the Baptist.

Keep in mind that John did not know the time that would elapse between Jesus’ first coming into the world to win salvation for sinners, and His second coming at the end of the world for judgment. Maybe from his limited perspective, he just needed reassurance that Jesus was doing all the work expected of the Christ. So it says: *“When John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’”* (vs. 2-3).

Like John, do we at times have questions of expectation concerning Christ’s coming? Do we get disappointed when we do not see Him working in our lives the way we wanted?

Maybe once, following Him seemed to promise constant joy. We felt more excited about reading His Word and sharing our faith. But as time passed, we began to have questions of expectation: *“Why is it that when I try to follow Jesus faithfully, I do not feel the glory of His Kingdom but a cross of suffering? Why is it that, when I faithfully share His Word with others, I don’t feel the joy of acceptance but the hurt of rejection? Why is it that though I try to do right in my life callings, I feel it coming to an anticlimactic end, imprisoned in my frustrations, pains, and sorrows?”* We may ask: *“Am I missing out on the blessings of His coming Kingdom? Is it because of my personal sins and failures?”*

Like John our understanding of how Jesus is working in our lives is limited. We have His promise that He is working all things together for our good (Romans 8:28), and that He will bring all things to a wonderful end in heaven. But in a difficult time of trial, temptation, and doubt we may wonder: Why doesn’t He bring deliverance right away? Then maybe it is easy to ask: *“Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”*

Jesus says: *“Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me”* (vs. 6). He does not want our questions of expectation to lead us to fall away from faith. Like John, even in darkest times of trial and temptation, Jesus wants to strengthen our faith by His Word.

John did the right thing in sending his disciples to ask Jesus, to receive faith’s reassurance. *“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them’”* (vs. 4-5). Jesus points to Isaiah 35:5-6 and 61:1 saying: “Look, I am healing the sick and raising the dead. I am preaching the Gospel of salvation to poor sinners. I am doing the works prophesied of the Christ.” In answer to John’s questions of expectation, Jesus’ answer was: “Be content to see Me fulfilling the Scriptures; and trust Me to fulfill all things in due time.”

Isn’t this the answer we need too? Let us be content in knowing Jesus’ healing miracles and His preaching of the Gospel to us poor sinners. Think of the great miracle He worked for us, as God’s Son was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born in our flesh as our Savior. Think of the great work Jesus did for us, as the Baby born at Christmas grew up showing trust and obedience to His heavenly Father, in that perfect life God counts to us. Think of the great healing this divine Physician worked for us when He bore all our sins and punishment in His cross and suffering, so that as Isaiah 53:5 says: *“the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”*

Now Jesus continues to do His work of preaching His Gospel to us poor sinners. He forgives all the ways we have been disappointed and impatient with Him. He forgives all our doubts about His working good in our lives. What great wonders He has done in baptizing and giving us faith, healing our souls of sin, raising us from spiritual death to eternal life in His Kingdom!

Jesus would say to us: “Now trust Me to fulfill all things in due time. As your Savior, I am still doing the works you need. I am still taking care of you, even in difficult times. I am still here to strengthen you in times of sorrow and pain, darkness and doubt. Trust My Word, trust My promises. I am still working My great purpose in your life today.”

## **2) Jesus’ question concerning the message of John**

As John’s disciples departed, Jesus asked His own question of expectation concerning the message of John. He said the multitude: *“What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses”* (vs. 7-8).

John preached to prepare people for Jesus’ coming. But many had gone to see him for wrong reasons. If they expected to hear a message that swayed like a reed in the wind with changing times, telling them what they wanted to hear, that they were fine living

how they wanted, they were disappointed. John preached the unchanging Word of God, calling sinners to repentance and self-denial, to prepare hearts rightly for the Savior's coming. Nor was he dressed in soft garments like those in king's houses, saying what is politically correct, doing what brought him worldly comfort and safety. Indeed, his faithful preaching of repentance is what got him put in prison and eventually put to death.

Jesus continues: "*But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You'*" (vs. 9-10). Here Jesus cites Malachi 3:1 to show that John was the prophet who was to prepare the way before Him. John may have disappointed some, but he was the real thing.

If some thought they could reject John's message of repentance and come to hear Jesus' emphasis on grace and healing, they were wrong. Without repentance, one cannot receive Christ's forgiveness. Without repentance, one cannot truly celebrate Christ's coming at Christmas, nor can he receive Christ's salvation in Word and Sacrament, nor is he prepared for Christ's coming for judgment at the Last Day.

But with repentance and faith in Jesus as our Savior from sin, we receive all the blessings and greatness of His Kingdom. We hear this in His words: "*Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*" (vs. 11). John was more than a prophet; his calling was great as the forerunner of Christ to welcome His coming. Yet now, even the least believer in Christ's Kingdom is greater in terms of advantage. John longed to see the fulfillment of Jesus' work; but we, by the revealed Word of God, have seen the fulfillment in Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension as our Savior (Matthew 13:16-17).

When it comes to questions of expectation concerning Christ's coming, He does not disappoint us. Truly we can trust Him to work all things for our good, in time and eternity. As we prepare to celebrate His first coming at Christmas, we can rejoice that He was born so humbly to work out our salvation. As He comes to us today in Word and Sacrament, we can rejoice that He is present to give us His blood-bought forgiveness and eternal life. When He comes again in glory, we will rejoice as He brings us final deliverance from all the trials and tribulations of this life, and He will gather us with all the family of believers in His wonderful heavenly home and give us all the gifts of His Kingdom forevermore.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.