

2026-05-24

God's Expectations

Mark 12:1-12

Why didn't the Jewish People, especially the religious leaders, accept Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah? Why did they reject Jesus? God expected them to believe, yet they did not. If I went into Boswell hospital and healed everyone in every room, wouldn't everyone in the hospital think there was something special about me? And then, if I went down to the school of the blind and gave sight to every blind person in the school, wouldn't everyone in the school think there was something special about me? What if I showed up at some funerals and raised people from the dead, wouldn't everyone at the **funeral think there was something** special about me? You would think that I could create a very good following by doing all of these. Well, I have not done any of those things and I never will, but Jesus did. Jesus healed everyone He encountered (Matthew 8:16; 12:15 / Luke 6:19), except for some in His hometown who refused to believe in Him. Jesus gave sight to the blind (John 9:1-12). Jesus raised the dead (John 11:38-44). All these actions plus His great teaching should have convinced all Jews that Jesus is their Messiah. Unfortunately, it did not. For many of the Jewish leadership, they had some problems with Jesus. One problem had to do with the Jewish prophecies of the Messiah. Did Jesus fulfill all the prophecies the Messiah was supposed to fulfill?

Be careful, with your answer. We know that Jesus did not fulfill **all** the prophecies attributed to the Messiah. He only fulfilled the prophecies about the Messiah's first appearance. What were some of those prophecies Jesus fulfilled? **Daniel** foretold **when** the Messiah would come (9:24-26). **Micah** foretold **where** the Messiah would be born (5:2). **Isaiah** foretold **how** the Messiah would be born (7:14). **Isaiah** also foretold **what** the Messiah would do (61:1-2) and **how** the Messiah would suffer (53:1-12). **Zechariah** foretold **how** the Messiah would enter Jerusalem (9:9). Jesus did not fulfill the prophecies about His second coming.

The problem with the religious Jews is that **they did not know or understand there were 2 different comings of the Messiah**. They only believed the Messiah would come one time. They thought this way because many of the prophecies announcing the Messiah's coming were given together as if they were one. When you read the whole prophecy that is given you will better understand the Jewish leaders' confusion. Remember, they did not have chapters and verses in their scriptures back then. Since Jesus did not fulfill **all** the prophecies He was supposed to in their eyes, He was not the Messiah. It is easy to look back and see their big mistake. It is much harder to see the truth when you have been taught to believe something different.

The biggest prophecy Jesus did not fulfill was restoring the kingdom to Israel (Psalm 2:7-9). Even Jesus' own disciples did not understand that there was a long time-delay between the first and second comings of Jesus. After Jesus rose from the dead, His disciples asked Him, "*Lord, will You **at this time** restore the kingdom to Israel?*" (Acts 1:6). The disciples were expecting Jesus to begin His earthly reign right after His resurrection. They may have even seen His resurrection as His second coming. They wanted Jesus to rule the nations and bring peace (Micah 5:3-5 / Zechariah 9:10). They knew the coming of the Messiah was a day of great vengeance (Isaiah 61:2). They were ready to rule with Him. But there was no removal of the occupying nation from Israel. There was no great judgment of the nations. There never has been worldwide peace. All this will happen when Jesus returns. The Jews are still confused about the Messiah's 2 comings. What the disciples were tasked with doing until the Messiah returns is to be like John the Baptist. We are to prepare people for His return. We are to make disciples, calling people to repent, believe, be baptized and follow His teachings (Matthew 28:19-20).

Another big problem the Jews had with Jesus being the Messiah centered around their belief in God. **The Jews believed God is one.** Every Jew memorized the Shema. Every Jewish parent taught this to their children. "*Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength*" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). The Jews were taught all their lives to believe in and trust in God. **God was God. He was not a man.** Then Jesus comes and claimed to be God. He told the Jews "*Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM!*" (John 8:58). Jesus told them the truth. He existed before Abraham was born. Jesus used the "*I Am!*" statement to tell them of His eternal being as God did with Moses (Exodus 3:14). Jesus would tell the Jews "*I and the Father are one*" (John 10:30). After Jesus made these claims, the Jews picked up stones to stone Jesus. The Jews believed Jesus spoke blasphemy. The Jews told Jesus, "*For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God*" (10:33). Jesus always used scripture to help the Jews understand who He was. This was possible! This was prophesied! The Jews really struggled with this truth. Jesus tried to win them over by telling them, if you cannot believe the words I say, then believe the works I do (John 10:38). The vast majority of Jews did not believe His words or His works and they still do not.

A third thing the Jews could not accept concerning Jesus was **His claim that He could forgive sins.** For the Jews, only God could forgive sins (Mark 2:7). God had already established a sacrificial system for the forgiveness of sins. The Jews had been practicing animal sacrifices for over 1,500 years. The Temple was central for this. Not only did Jesus forgive sins, He also foretold that the Temple would be

destroyed. Their way of gaining forgiveness was going to be demolished. Jesus would establish with His followers **a new understanding about how forgiveness comes about**. No longer would the Temple be necessary. No longer would animal sacrifices be required. Those sacrifices never really brought true forgiveness of sins anyway. Jesus Himself would give His body, His temple, and His blood, His life for true and meaningful forgiveness. Jesus would sacrifice His life to pay the debt for our sins. **True forgiveness, eternal life would come to each person who would believe in the work of God**. Just as the works of Jesus revealed His true identity, our works, our actions reveal our true belief. Our works do not save us. It is God's grace, His sacrifice, His work that saves us. Our desire to live the life God has designed for all humanity shows God our faith in Him and His teaching. Next Sunday we will have the Lord's Supper. We take the Lord's Supper to remind ourselves that our forgiveness does not come through animal sacrifices at the Temple. **Our forgiveness only comes through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins**. It is only through the sacrifice of Jesus that we are justified before God and have peace with God (Romans 5:1).

In the parable that Jesus spoke to those Jewish religious leaders in the Temple, we learn of a fourth reason the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Isaiah spoke a similar parable (chapter 5). The man in this parable represents God. God does everything He can so that this vineyard, the nation of Israel will produce good fruit. God leaves the nation in the hands of its leaders. At those times when the vineyard should have produced an abundance of fruit, God sent His servants, the prophets to collect. Instead of collecting good fruit, the servants of God, the prophets were beaten by those religious leaders and the nation did not heed the words of the prophets. Over the centuries, God would send many prophets. All were beaten. Some were killed. No prophet found that the nation or its leaders produced any good fruit. Finally, God sent His only Son, His beloved Son. Surely the nation and its leaders would respect the Son. God gave them their chance. Jesus represents the Son. When the religious leaders saw the Son, they said among themselves, "*This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours*" (Mark 12:7). We know that Jesus was not respected. He was rejected, tortured and crucified.

We see from this parable the fourth reason the ruling Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. **They loved their lives, the power and control over the nation**. They would much rather keep their lives the way things were than give up their lives and let the Messiah Jesus rule their lives. **The Jewish leaders refused to believe because they did not want their lives to change**. They wanted to keep the nation of Israel the way it was. How did Jesus respond to their selfish and greedy attitude? "*He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others*" (Mark

12:9). Jesus used a scripture from Psalm 118:22-23 to prove His point. *“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”* (Mark 12:10-11). God knew that His people would reject His Messiah when He came. So, God had that truth spoken before it happened in hopes that some Jews would repent and believe in Jesus who was rejected.

Paul’s hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel was that *“they may be saved”* (Romans 10:1). Many Jews have a zeal for God. Their problem is they refuse to believe God’s revelation. They have knowledge of the law. They try to be good. They lack the true knowledge of God. Paul wrote that they are *“ignorant of God’s righteousness”* (10:3). God’s righteousness is revealed in the good news of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:17). We are all sinners and cannot save ourselves. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (3:23). Everyone needs a Savior and Jesus is God’s plan for our redemption.

What about the Gentiles? They do not have scriptures a Savior has to fulfill. The Greeks did not have a problem with God becoming a man. Like the Jews, many people do not believe they are that bad. They think they can convince God that they are good enough. Others think they do not need a Savior. Many love the life they are living and do not want to change. We may think that we can set the criteria to enter God’s home called heaven. Actually, God sets His own criteria for heaven. If you think that the criteria to get into heaven is goodness, you are wrong. God has set the standard at perfection. Our problem is that we do not see ourselves as God sees us. God sees all people as people in need of a Savior. No one is perfect. All are sinners. All need forgiveness. All need redemption. Everyone needs to recognize and believe that only Jesus, as God died in our place for our sins. Our own righteousness is not good enough. We must submit to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3). We must have God’s righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:9). We must put off the old person, our former conduct and put on the new person *“which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness”* (Ephesians 4:22-23). God expects us to believe His words, not our tradition or religion. He expects us to turn away from our sin and intentionally live for Him not for self alone.

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