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12-17-2015

Expecting the King

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Recommended Citation

Hoekstra, Erik, "Expecting the King" (2015). *Faculty Work: Comprehensive List*. Paper 410.
http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/410

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Expecting the King

Abstract

"We need to understand what the Kingdom is, how it will come, and when it will arrive, won't always align with our expectations."

Posting about running ahead of God from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/expecting-the-king/>

Keywords

In All Things, Advent, expectation, Peter (apostle), kingdom

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Expecting the King

▫ inallthings.org/expecting-the-king/

Erik Hoekstra

Matthew 16:21-23

21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” 23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man

I admit it—I can’t handle “already, not yet”. The concept that we’re to live in this ‘in-between’ reality with Christ’s resurrection having ‘already’ conquered death is powerful. However, we also see, all around us every day, the continuing groaning of creation. Sometimes the wrong really is ‘off so strong’.

Make no mistake, the opportunity to work daily for ‘Christ-centered’ renewal in the here-and-now gets me motivated and excited. It really makes me expect that the work we do now has eternal significance and that, if we plan well and really work hard, great things will happen. But, my hopes and expectations are often challenged and frustrated too.

The ‘already, not yet’ part of Reformed theology and eschatology drives me crazy, sometimes.

I’m impatient.

I love praying “Thy Kingdom come, and Thy will be done”, but I want it to happen NOW!

I think the Apostle Peter had some of the same impatience. I, like Peter, often set my mind (and my expectations) on the things of man, rather than the things of God.

Perhaps, for people like Peter and me, part of the reason God sent Christ as a baby was to help us with our impatience and to reset our expectations. We need to understand what the Kingdom is, how it will come, and when it will arrive, won’t always align with our expectations. Putting ourselves in service of a babe in the manger puts everything in perspective.

It’s also probably why I like Easter more than Christmas—but probably why I need Advent.

Peter was always the ‘all in’ disciple. His expectations for Jesus’ ministry were BIG and bold. Consider just these examples:

1. In Gethsemane—Peter tries to prevent Jesus from being arrested by getting in a sword fight with the soldiers. And, Jesus tells him to back off—and performs a miracle of healing by reattaching the soldier’s ear.
2. On the boat—it wasn’t initially Jesus’ idea to have Peter come to him walking on the water. Peter blurts out—“Hey, if that’s really you, let me walk on the water too!” Jesus allows Peter to try, but then when Peter’s faith falters, Jesus is there to lend a hand.
3. On the Mount of Transfiguration—Peter tries to convince Jesus, Elijah, and Moses that they should stay up there permanently and set up headquarters in some Peter-made buildings.

4. In the passage for today, just after confessing Jesus as Lord, Peter rebukes Jesus for telling the disciples about how he would need to suffer and die.

In these examples, just what were Peter's expectations? Did he really think that he'd take on the entire group of soldiers? Did he really think that he could just 'hang out' with Moses, Elijah, and Jesus? How did he think the water-walking would really turn out?

In the last example, Jesus has to get very forceful with Peter—calling him a hindrance to the work and comparing him to Satan. Peter was bit of a mule sometimes—and so am I.

It's interesting and encouraging to me that while Peter's expectations needed some adjustment, God did find Peter useful in building upon to help the early church grow.

Just like Peter, I feel blessed and humbled that God wants to work with me—impetuous and impatient though I sometimes am.

One of the challenges that I've noticed about some Reformed folks, particularly those from my (Kuyperian) tradition who emphasize the Kingdom building aspect of Christ, is our expectation—similar to Peter's—that the work depends on us being boldly pro-active in service 'to the King'. We sometime supplant Christ's place in the work and put ourselves in His place—at the center. Kind of like Peter.

So, my Advent prayer is for God to realign my expectations. For God to quiet my own aspirations, for God to calibrate my various goals, plans, and expectations to His timing, for me to really take in the scene in Bethlehem, for me to follow the Christ-child—where, and when, and how He wants me to go. For me to put my mind on things of God, rather than the things of man.

Prayer—

Lord, like Peter, I sometimes get confused and mess things up in my desire to participate in your Kingdom building work. This Advent, slow me down to recognize your movement into this world as the ultimate act of love. Let me take it in, quietly and calmly, and recalibrate me and my expectations in alignment with your purposes for me in the year to come. Thank you for being God—and remind me that I'm your follower this Advent season. Forgive me for when I get ahead of myself and ahead of you. Amen.