

SUPERNATURAL NOT SOCIAL

- A. Introduction: Jesus warned that the years leading up to His return will be marked by false christs and false prophets who will deceive even believers (Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23-24). Therefore, we are taking time to look at Jesus as He is revealed in the pages of the Bible—Who He is and why He came to earth.
1. Accurate knowledge from the Bible has always been important, but never more so than now. We must become readers of New Testament particularly, because it documents the events connected with Jesus' first coming along with what He did and what He taught.
 - a. In addition to reading the New Testament (cover to cover, over and over until we are familiar with it), we must understand the purpose of the Bible. It is not a self-help book aimed at helping us live a good life. Nor is it a collection of witty sayings meant to comfort and encourage us.
 - b. The Bible is a collection of 66 books and letters (called epistles) that altogether tell the story of God's desire for a family and the lengths to which He has gone to obtain a family through Jesus.
 1. Every book adds to or advances this story in some way. And every verse is consistent with the overall theme of the Bible. Our interpretation of a particular passage must be consistent with the rest of the Bible. (The Bible is not a collection of independent, unrelated verses. The Bible was divided into chapters and verses in the Middle Ages for reference purposes.)
 2. Everything in the Bible was written by someone to someone about something. The Holy Spirit inspired real people as they wrote to other real people about real issues that concerned them. A particular verse cannot mean something to you or me that it would not have meant to the original hearers or readers.
 - c. It is important that we understand these points because most false christs and prophets who proclaim false gospels "have scripture" (or so-called supporting verses) for what they preach and teach.
 1. Matt 4:5-6—The devil himself uses scripture. When Satan came to tempt Jesus, he quoted scriptures as part of his temptation (Ps 91:11-12).
 2. But he took them out of context and misapplied them in a way that was not consistent with other passages of scripture (Deut 6:16; Ex 17:7; Num 21:5; Ps 78:18; etc.).
 2. The New Testament clearly reveals that Jesus Christ came to earth to die for the sins of men and make it possible for human beings to become sons and daughters of God through faith in Him (in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning His coming). Any teaching proclaimed in Jesus' name, any interpretation of a particular verse, must be consistent with this overall theme.
 - a. It's becoming increasingly popular in so-called "Christian" circles to define the gospel as changing society by caring for the poor, the marginalized, and the victims of injustice. These ideas are based on verses taken out of context. (We mentioned this last week and will say more next week.)
 - b. There's nothing wrong with pursuing the above activities. But Jesus didn't come to make this world a better place through social change. He came to deal with sin and produce transformation in the hearts of men, changing them from sinners into holy, righteous sons of God. The gospel is supernatural, not social.
 1. It is possible for sinners to support the poor, the marginalized, and the victims of social injustice without any internal change—with no thought of pleasing God or living a holy life.
 2. Remember one of the characteristics of the days before Jesus returns: (People) will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly (II Tim 3:5, NLT).
- B. There is a historical context for every verse in the Bible. Jesus was born into a specific historical setting that makes His purpose in coming to earth crystal clear. Let's examine it.
1. As we have previously discussed, God created men and women to become His sons and daughters. Through the first man, Adam, sin entered the human race and men became sinners by nature. Rom 5:19

- a. Gen 3:15—God promised that there would one day come the Seed (Jesus) of the woman (Mary) to undo the damage done. This great promise is known as the *protoevangel* or the first gospel. Gospel comes from a Greek word that means good news.
 - b. Gen 12:1-3—God identified the people group through whom the promised Seed would come, the descendants of Abraham (Jews). God Himself gave this good news (gospel) to Abraham (Gal 3:8).
 1. Through the centuries, God gave increasing prophecies with more details about the gospel—the coming Seed and His work to redeem or deliver men from sin so that God can have His family.
 2. Luke 1:67-79—When John the Baptist was circumcised (shortly before Jesus was born), the Holy Spirit came on John’s father, Zacharias, and he made reference to the fact that God was in the process of fulfilling the good news He has been proclaiming since the world began. v68-70
 - c. Gal 4:4—But when the proper time had fully come (Amp), two thousand years ago, Jesus incarnated (or took on a human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary) and was born into this world.
2. Based on the writings of the Old Testament prophets (their books are preserved in Old Testament), first century Jews were expecting the promised Seed (Redeemer, Messiah) to come. And, they were also expecting God to establish His kingdom on earth. Dan 2:44; Dan 7:27; etc.
 - a. Matt 3:1-3—Jesus’ public ministry was preceded by John the Baptist who came on the scene with this message: Repent for the kingdom of Heaven (kingdom of God) is at hand. Prepare for the Lord’s coming (Isa 40:3). His message got everyone’s attention.
 - A. Repent literally means to change the mind. It’s used of turning from sin and implies a feeling of sorrow and regret. The idea is that a change of mind produces a change of purpose that results in a changed life.
 - B. v5-6—The people turned out in droves to hear John and to confess their sins and be baptized by him because they also knew from the Old Testament prophets that only the righteous can enter the kingdom of God. Sin would keep them out of the kingdom. Ps 24:3-4; Ps 15:1-5; etc.
 1. John baptized or immersed men and women in water. This is not Christian baptism. This is ceremonial cleansing or purification—a common practice among the Jews. People, clothing, utensils, and even furniture were ceremonially cleansed.
 2. Submitting to this cleansing or ceremonial purification was an expression of the fact that the one being cleansed believed that the coming of the Lord (the Messiah, the Christ) was near. Those who did so were obedient to John’s call to prepare the way of the Lord.
 - b. Matt 4:17—Then Jesus came on the scene. His first recorded public words were also: Repent for the kingdom of Heaven (or kingdom of God) is at hand.
 - c. Mark 1:14-15—Mark’s account of the incident gives us additional details: Believe the gospel. The first hearers of these words understood the gospel in terms of what all the prophets wrote: The Seed is coming to bring an end to sin and establish His kingdom.
 3. Jesus’ earth ministry in the three plus years leading up to the crucifixion was a time of transition. He was dealing with Old Testament (or Old Covenant) Jews whose lives were guided by the Law of Moses.
 - a. The Law of Moses (first five books of the Bible) was given to Moses following Israel’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt. It included civil and criminal laws, dietary laws, ceremonial and sacrificial laws. It was intended to help them establish a functioning society and live in relationship with God when they reached the land of Canaan.
 1. Much of Jesus’ preaching was aimed at preparing them for what was to come—a New Covenant or agreement between God and man that would usher in big changes including a new relationship between God and man.
 2. They had no concept of an individual Father-son relationship between God and man. They referred to Abraham as their Father (Matt 3:9). And, in fact, they were not sons because no one was born of God before the Cross. They were servants of God.

- b. In His teachings, Jesus didn't immediately spell everything out because, not only was He gradually preparing people for this new relationship between God and man (that of Father and son), but because His primary mission was to make that possible by dying for the sins of men.
 - 1. The All-knowing (Omnipotent) God knew before He created the earth that wicked men, inspired by Satan, would rise up and crucify the Lord. God caused it to serve His ultimate purpose when He chose to become a sacrifice for the sins of men. Luke 22:3; Acts 2:23; etc.
 - 2. I Cor 2:7-8—Had the devil known in advance what the Lord was going to do, he would not have inspired the crucifixion. So, this aspect of Jesus' work had to be veiled until it happened.
- 4. The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. (It is also the source of many misapplied verses that are used to support counterfeit gospels.) In His sermon, Jesus made a number of bold statements aimed at preparing men and women to receive the kingdom of God.
 - a. First, we need some information about the religious leaders of Jesus' day because much of what He said in His sermon makes sense only if you understand some things about the scribes and Pharisees.
 - 1. Scribes were professional scholars and legal experts in the Law of Moses. Most scribes were also Pharisees. Pharisees were religious leaders who strictly observed the Law of Moses.
 - 2. However, they believed that their own oral traditions were equal in authority to the Old Testament books. These oral traditions consisted of discussions, decisions, interpretations, and saying given by early rabbis and scribes of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible).
 - A. They were handed down orally for many generations until they were written down in the Mishnah (written in Hebrew), a commentary on the Torah, and the Gemara, additional comments on the Mishnah (written in Aramaic).
 - B. As an example: the Law said, fast once a year. Oral tradition said, fast two times a week.
 - 3. While the Jews were in captivity in Babylon (400 plus years before Jesus came), they lost their Hebrew language. When they returned to Canaan only the religious leaders were fluent in Hebrew. The common man spoke only Aramaic.
 - A. The Scriptures were written in Hebrew. That meant the common man had to rely on the scribes and Pharisees and their interpretation of the Scriptures.
 - B. Everything the people knew about righteousness came from the teachings and the actions of the Pharisees and the scribes. But, as Jesus would inform them, that wasn't enough.
 - b. Early in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told His listeners: Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will not enter the kingdom. Matt 5:20
 - 1. When we examine Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees and His comments to and about them, we learn that they had an external righteousness, or correct outward actions. They fulfilled the Law of Moses and their interpretations (oral tradition), so, outwardly, they appeared righteous.
 - 2. Matt 23:27-28--But, according to Jesus, they were like white-washed graves—beautiful on the outside, but filled with rotteness and death inwardly. Under the Law of Moses a person was considered unclean if he touched anything belonging to the dead (Num 19:11-16), so the Jews took care to have their tombs white-washed each year so that they were easy to spot and could be easily avoided (Luke 11:44).
 - c. The bulk of the Sermon on the Mount is directed at exposing the false righteousness preached and practiced by the Pharisees as Jesus prepared the people to receive the inward righteousness He would provide through the Cross.
- 5. As Jesus walked the dusty roads of the Holy Land, He made it clear why He came to earth. Jesus came to deal with sin and make it possible for sinners to become sons and daughters of God.
 - a. Matt 9:10-13—Jesus went to eat in the home of Matthew, one of His original apostles. Matthew was a tax collector (publican) before he began to follow Jesus. The religious leaders murmured against Jesus because He ate with publicans and sinners. Jesus answered:

1. v12—Well people don't need a doctor. Sick people do. Righteous men don't need help. Sinners do. I've come to call sinners to repentance. I have a cure for their sin.
 2. v13—He told the Pharisees that they should learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice (Hosea 6:6 Micah 6:6-8). Sacrifices are external activities. Mercy is internal. The word has the idea of quality of heart, mind, character.
- b. Luke 19:1-10—When Jesus dined at the home of Zacchaeus, another tax collector, and was again criticized by the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus said: I've come to seek and save the lost (v9-10).
1. Because of sin, human beings are lost to their created purpose—sonship and relationship with God. The Greek word translated lost means to destroy fully or lose (lit. or fig.). It's the same word is used in John 3:16 (perish). Shall not perish—come to destruction, be lost (Amp)
 2. Notice v11. Jesus was aware that those who were listening to Him thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. So He told a parable about a king who went away for a time and expected his servants to remain faithful while he was gone, until He returned.
 - A. Jesus knew that the visible kingdom would not be established on earth at that time. Rather, a form of the kingdom not clearly seen by the Old Testament prophets would come into being—the kingdom or reign of God in the hearts of men. Luke 17:20-21
 - B. This inward form of the kingdom would transform men and women from sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God through new birth. John 3:3-5; Titus 3:5; etc.
- c. Matt 26:26-28—The night before Jesus was crucified He told His apostles that His blood would be shed for the remission of sin—the putting away of sins (Wuest). Remission comes from a word that means to release one's sins from the sinner.
1. Luke 24:44-47—On Resurrection day Jesus went through the Old Testament scriptures that foretold His death, burial, and resurrection and explained how He had fulfilled them all.
 2. And now, He told His apostles, repentance and remission of sins can be preached to all nations. Go into all the world and preach the gospel. The regaining of what was lost to sin has begun.
- C. Conclusion: When we read the New Testament from start to finish we find that the gospel supernatural, not social. Jesus went to the Cross, not to change society, but to make it possible for men to become righteous inwardly and then express that righteousness outwardly through holy living. Changed hearts come through belief in and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.
1. On the Cross Jesus become an atoning sacrifice for our sin. To atone means to do something to make up for a wrong done, to make amends; to pay the penalty. Jesus (the just) died for the unjust (us) to bring us to God. Bring means to bring near to present us to God. I John 4:9-10; I Pet 3:18
 - a. Col 1:21-22—And you likewise, who once were estranged from Him, and with your mind at war with Him, when you lived in wickedness, yet now He (Jesus) has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, that He might bring you to his presence in holiness, without blemish and without reproach. (Conybeare)
 - b. II Cor 5:21—Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf (ASV) that we might be changed into the righteousness of God in Christ (Conybeare), that in him we might be turned into the holiness of God (Knox), so that in Christ we might be made good with the goodness of God (Phillips).
 2. Jesus' sacrifice satisfied justice on our behalf and broke down the barrier between God and man—our our sin. His sacrifice so cleanses us from the guilt of sin (or justifies us) that God can indwell us by His Spirit and His life and make us His sons. I John 5:1; John 1:12-13
 3. If someone proclaims a gospel with no mention of sin and our need for a Savior, but instead emphasizes religious activities aimed at making the world a better place—with no mention of changed hearts that produce changed lives and holy living—it's a social gospel and not a supernatural gospel. It's a counterfeit. Lots more next week!!