

## THE TRUE GOSPEL

- A. Introduction: We're discussing the fact that, according to Jesus, the years prior to His return will be marked by religious deception—false christs and false prophets who preach false gospels. So, we're taking time to look at who Jesus is according to the Bible to protect ourselves from deception. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23-24.
1. In the last few lessons, we've been considering a trend that we see, not just among unbelievers, but among those who profess to be Christians.
    - a. It is becoming increasingly common to hear people espouse the idea that true Christianity is about fixing up society by working to end poverty and help the marginalized as we eradicate social injustice in the world. After all, they say, we're all children of God. Some go so far as to say that it is our responsibility as Christians to establish the kingdom of God on earth.
    - b. Those who profess these ideas use Bible verses (some even spoken by Jesus) to support their point of view. But those verses are taken out of context.
      1. The Bible is not a collection of independent verses. It is a collection of sixty-six books that together tell the story of God's desire for a family and the lengths to which He has gone to obtain His family through Jesus.
      2. Every verse has a historical context. This means that every line was written by someone, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to someone about something. To properly interpret and understand a verse we must consider those three factors.
  2. When we look at Jesus in historical context and consider what He said, who He was talking to, and what point He was making, it is very clear that Jesus did not come to fix up society.
    - a. Jesus came to earth to die as a sacrifice for the sins of men so that all who put faith in Him can be transformed from sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God.
      1. Mark 10:45—(Jesus said) For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many. (NLT)
      2. Titus 2:14—He (Jesus) gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing what is right. (NLT)
      3. John 1:12—But to all who believed him (Jesus) and accepted him, he gave the right to become children (literally, sons) of God. (NLT)
    - b. The gospel is not a social message aimed at changing society through religious or governmental programs. It is supernatural. By the power of God, through faith in Christ and His work on the Cross, sinful men and women are transformed into sons and daughters of God.
  3. Last week we began to examine the historical context into which Jesus was born to help us see clearly why He came to earth as well as what message (or gospel) He preached. We continue in this lesson.
    - a. The people group to whom Jesus first came (the Jews) understood through the writings of their prophets (in what we know as the Old Testament) that the Messiah (the Redeemer, the promised Seed of Gen 3:15) was going to establish the kingdom of God on earth. Dan 2:44; Dan 7:27; etc.
      1. First century Jews also knew from their prophets that only the righteous can be part of God's kingdom, and were expecting the Messiah to somehow deal with sin. Isa 40:1-3; Dan 9:24-27
      2. We pointed out last week that Jesus had everyone's attention when He came preaching: Repent and believe the good news that the kingdom is at hand. Matt 4:17; Mark 1:14-15
    - b. Jesus' three year plus earth ministry was a time of transition. He was dealing with Old Testament Jews who lived under the Law of Moses. But everything was about to change.
      1. Through His death, burial, and resurrection Jesus would establish a new relationship between God and man. By paying for sin He would make it possible for men and women to become sons and daughters of God.
      2. The Jews had no concept of an individual Father-son relationship between God and man. The

Pharisees considered it blasphemy when Jesus referred to God as His Father. John 10:29-33

3. Yet, as He prepared people, Jesus made a number of bold statements about men who are sons of God, along with statements about God as a Father to His sons. Matt 5:16; Matt 6:25-33; etc.
- B. John 20:11-16—On resurrection day, Mary Magdalene was the first to see Jesus after He had risen.
1. Jesus spoke these words to her: Go tell my brothers (my disciples) that I ascend (go up) to My Father and your Father, My God and your God. v17
    - a. Note that Jesus not only called God His Father, but referred to God as their Father as well. This was a revolutionary statement. Mary did as the Lord instructed her and gave them the message. v18
    - b. None of the disciples had full understanding yet of what Jesus' words meant, but He spent forty more days before returning to Heaven, instructing them concerning the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3
  2. Later that same day (resurrection day), Jesus went to see His original disciples (apostles). Luke 24:36-48
    - a. At first they were afraid, thinking that they were seeing a ghost. Jesus held out His hands and feet and told them to touch Him. They could hardly believe it, but their fear turned to joy and wonder.
      1. Jesus ate some food and then went through the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms (the Old Testament) and explained how He had fulfilled what was written about Him.
      2. Then He opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures, concluding with the fact that remission (or the wiping out) of sin can now be preached among the nations. This is the gospel that Jesus sent them out to proclaim. Mark 16:15
    - b. John 20:19-23 gives several more details about what happened in this first post-resurrection meeting between Jesus and His apostles.
      1. v23—As my Father has sent me, so I send you to proclaim repentance and remission of sins. If anyone acknowledges me and my sacrifice, you can assure them that their sins are remitted or taken away. If they don't acknowledge me, you can assure them that their sins remain.
      2. Go back to v22. Note that Jesus breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Ghost. (This is not Acts 2:1-4, the Day of Pentecost, when they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. That will be their second encounter with the Holy Ghost—and a lesson for another day.)
  3. Just three days earlier, at the Last Supper, Jesus had talked to His apostles about the Holy Spirit. (Ghost and Spirit are the same word in the Greek language.) John recorded a lengthy passage about what Jesus said as He prepared them for the fact that He was soon going to leave them. John 13:33-36; John 14:1-3
    - a. Jesus told them that He was not going to leave them helpless. He and His Father would send the Holy Spirit to them, whom He called another Comforter. The Greek word translated another means another of the same sort (another like Me). John 14:16-17; 26; John 16:7
    - b. Remember, God is one God (one Being) Who simultaneously manifests as three distinct Persons—the Father, the Word (or the Son), and the Holy Spirit. The Son (Jesus) is the visible manifestation of the Invisible God. The Holy Spirit is the invisible presence of everything Jesus is.
      1. These three Persons are distinct, but not separate. They co-inhere or share one Divine nature. They are Persons in the sense of being self aware, and aware of and interactive with each other.
        - A. This is the mystery of the Godhead (the Divine nature). It is beyond our comprehension because we are talking about the Infinite God (He is eternal and without limits) and we are finite or limited beings. All attempts to explain the nature of God fall short.
        - B. How can the Infinite, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient God (the Father and the Son) give or send the Infinite, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient God (the Holy Spirit)? This is beyond our comprehension. We simply accept, believe, and rejoice.
      2. These three Persons work in cooperation with one another, including in the plan of redemption, God's plan to deliver men from the penalty and power of sin. In redemption, everything comes from God the Father through God the Son by God the Holy Ghost.

- A. The Father planned redemption. The Son purchased it through the Cross. The Holy Spirit performs it or makes what the Father provided through Jesus a reality in our lives.
- B. God works in our lives through His Word. The Bible reveals the Father's plan and tells us what Jesus accomplished. The Holy Spirit carries it out when we believe the Word of God about what the Father has provided through the Jesus. Jer 1:12
- c. John 14:17—Notice that Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit had been with them, but that when the Father gives Him and He comes, He will be in you.
  - 1. God with Israel was a familiar concept. Part of Israel's uniqueness as the people of God in the Old Testament was that God's presence was with them. The Temple in Jerusalem attested to that fact. But the nature of the relationship between God and man was about to change.
  - 2. The Infinite God has chosen to interact with finite beings by indwelling us. He created us with the capacity to receive His Spirit into our being and become His dwelling place. I Cor 6:19
    - A. In John 3:3-5 Jesus revealed that unless a man is born again (lit: born from above) he cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. John 3:6 makes it clear that Jesus is referring to an action carried out on a man by the Holy Spirit.
    - B. The new birth is an inward transformation of the immaterial part of a human being, accomplished by the Spirit of God. When we believe on Jesus, the Holy Spirit imparts eternal life (the life of God) to us and transforms us from sinners into sons and daughters.
  - 3. Back to John 20:22—Jesus used the Scriptures to preach the gospel to His disciples, showing them that He had paid for their sin through the sacrifice of Himself and they could now receive remission (the wiping out) of sins. They believed His Word, He breathed on them, and they were born of the Spirit.
    - A. John 1:12-13—But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan—this rebirth comes from God. (NLT)
    - B. Just as God breathed on Adam in the first creation, Jesus initiated the new creation, a race of sons born of God—sons who are and will be increasingly conformed to the image of Christ, the Perfect Son. Gen 2:7; II Cor 5:17; Rom 8:29-30
- 4. The apostle Paul became a believer in Christ when he encountered the resurrected Lord on the road to Damascus, Syria about two years after the resurrection (32 AD). Jesus appeared to Paul a number of times and personally taught Paul the gospel that he preached. Acts 9:1-5; Acts 26:16; Gal 1:11-12
  - a. Eph 1:4-5—Paul reported that, before God created the heavens and the earth, He chose men and women to become His sons and daughters through what Jesus would do for us. His plan, motivated by love, was that we'd be holy and without blame before Him (in His presence).
    - 1. God chose us for adoption as children (in the Greek, the word is sons—*huios*). Adoption means to place as an adult son. This word picture conveys an important point.
      - A. Among the Hebrews and the Romans, adoption involved an adult male becoming the son of another male for the purpose of inheritance (Gen 15:3; Gen 48:6). Under Roman law, the adopted one became, in the eyes of the law, a new creature. He was born again into a new family (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*).
      - B. Sin disqualified humanity for sonship because men became sinners by nature—children (sons) of the devil (Rom 5:19; Eph 2:3; John 8:44; I John 3:10; etc.). But through the Cross of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit we've been placed as sons in God's family. We have changed families through new birth.
      - C. I Cor 15:1-4—Paul defined the gospel thusly: Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and raised from the dead according to the Scriptures. His sacrifice paid for our sin and opened the way for us to become sons through new birth.

2. Gal 4:4-6; Rom 8:15—Paul further wrote that we have received the Spirit of God’s Son and the Spirit of adoption Who enables us to cry Abba Father. The Holy Spirit is that Spirit.
  - A. Abba was a term used by children for their father. Slaves were forbidden to address the head of the family as Abba. In the New Testament Abba is joined with the word Father.
  - B. Abba denotes unreasoning trust of children for their father. Father expresses intelligent comprehension of the relationship. Together (Abba Father), they express the love and intelligent confidence of a child (*Vine’s Dictionary*).
  - C. The power in the term is not the emotional aspect (i.e. we can call God Abba or Papa). It’s in the legal and vital relationship established through the Cross and the new birth.
- b. Titus 3:4-6—God the Father demonstrated His love by sending Jesus to die for us which opened the way for the Holy Spirit to regenerate and renew us—three in One working together to deliver men and women from sin and transform them into holy, righteous sons and daughters.
  1. Regeneration is made up of two Greek words, *palin* (again) *genesis* (birth). It’s supernatural.
  2. Renewing comes from a word that means to renew qualitatively. It is a renewing or renovation that makes a person different than in the past. It’s supernatural.
5. Before we close this lesson, let’s address one more point. When we talk about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, it sometimes leads to the question: Who do we, as Christians, pray to? We could do an entire lesson in answer to that question, but consider these points.
  - a. At the Last Supper, as Jesus prepared His apostles for the fact that He was soon going to leave, He told them that although they had been coming to Him for their needs these past three years, they would now be able to go to the Father in His name. John 16:23
    1. By paying for sin at the Cross Jesus would open the way to God for these men (and for us). God was about to become their Father and they would be able to go directly to Him in Jesus’ name (or because of what Jesus was about to do for them and for us).
    2. Jesus has spent the last three years preparing them for such a relationship by revealing God as a Father (Matt 6:25-33; Matt 7:9-11; etc.). They could be assured that their loving heavenly Father would take care of them through the Holy Spirit working with and in them.
  - b. There are no rules, no right or wrong answer, to this question. It’s about living with the awareness that because Jesus is your Savior, God is now your Father, and you’ve become the dwelling place of the Spirit of God. It’s about living with the confidence that what the Father has provided through the Son at the Cross, the Holy Spirit will make real in your experience.
    1. The Father is God. Jesus is God. The Holy Spirit is God. When you talk to one, you’re talking to them all because all are God. This is beyond our comprehension.
    2. As you live in relationship with the Lord your interaction will be inspired by that relationship. Sometimes you’ll address the Father, sometimes the Son, and sometimes the Holy Spirit.
- C. Conclusion: Christianity is more than a moral code or a system of beliefs—although it includes both.
  1. Christianity involves supernatural transformation by the indwelling Holy Spirit who regenerates and renews us, restoring us to our created purpose as holy righteous sons and daughters of God.
    - a. This transformation is possible because Jesus paid the price for sin and all who acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord can become sons of God through faith in Him.
    - b. God is a Father only to those He has indwelt by His Spirit. If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His. The Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:9
  2. The historical context of Jesus’ life, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection make it clear that the gospel is not a social gospel. It’s supernatural. It’s not about changing society. It’s about changing men and women into sons and daughters of God the Father through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit—made possible by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That’s the true gospel!