

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

- A. Introduction: Jesus indicated that the years leading up to His return will be marked by religious deception. According to Jesus, there will be false christs and false prophets who preach false gospels. So we are taking time to look at who Jesus is, why He came to earth, and what He preached—according to the Bible. We want to be so familiar with the genuine that we can quickly recognize counterfeits. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 24
1. For the past few weeks we've been discussing the fact that it is increasingly common to hear people (Christian and non-Christians) proclaim that true Christianity is aimed at fixing up this world by working to end poverty and help the marginalized as we eradicate social injustice in the world.
 - a. There's nothing wrong with working for justice or pursuing the above activities. But we must keep our priorities right. If we could somehow end injustice and poverty through governmental or religious programs, it would be for naught because all men are guilty of sin before a holy God and on their way to eternal separation from Him in Hell. Matt 16:26
 1. Neither this world nor human beings are as God created us to be because of sin—going back to Adam and Eve (lots of lessons for another day).
 2. All the poverty, crime, injustice, and marginalization of people groups are the outflow of human hearts darkened by sin. Fallen humanity cannot produce a just society because there's an underlying spiritual problem that must be eradicated by the power of God. We are by nature sons of the devil, sons of wrath. Eph 2:3; I John 3:10
 - b. Jesus didn't come to fix up society. He came to deal with sin and produce a transformation in the hearts of men, changing them from sinners into holy, righteous sons of God.
 1. The gospel is supernatural. By the power of God, through faith in Christ and His work on the Cross, sinful men and women can be transformed into sons and daughters of God.
 2. There is not even a hint of Christians working to change society in either the gospels or the epistles. Christians work to change hearts through the power of God.
 - c. In connection with His second coming, Jesus will make this world a "better place" in what the Bible calls the new heavens and earth—a subject for another night. Matt 13:37-43 ; II Pet 3:10-13
 2. People sometimes try to use Bible verses to support the idea of "fixing up society". However, the verses are taken out of context. Perhaps you've heard the phrase "Blessed are the peacemakers", from a statement that Jesus made. Matt 5:9
 - a. Some use His statement to support the idea that He came to bring peace to the world and we are to continue His work. This is an example of an out of context verse, misinterpreted and misapplied.
 1. The Bible reports that Jesus also said He didn't come to bring peace, but a sword. The Greek word literally means a sword. When used figuratively, it means war. Matt 10:34
 2. The Bible reveals that Jesus caused division or schisms among people because some received His message, but others didn't. John 7:43; John 9:16; John 10:19
 - b. In this lesson we'll continue to examine the historical context into which Jesus was born and carried out His ministry to help us see clearly why Jesus came to earth and what message He preached.
- B. Jesus was born into the Jews. Based on the writings of their prophets (the Old Testament), they knew that a Messiah or Redeemer was coming who would establish the kingdom of God on earth and restore this world to pre-sin conditions—similar to the Garden of Eden. Isa 51:3 ; Ezek 36:35; etc.
1. They also knew from the prophets that because only the righteous can participate in God's kingdom on earth, something had to be done about their sin. That's why they turned out in droves for John's baptism. They wanted to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Matt 3:1-6
 - a. First century Jews had no idea at this point that Jesus, through His death, burial, and resurrection, was going to pay for their sin and establish a new relationship between God and man.

- b. They had no idea that Jesus would make it possible for men and women to become sons and daughters of God or that He was going to indwell them by His Spirit and give them His eternal life.
- 2. Jesus' three year earth ministry was a time of transition. As He gradually prepared the people for what was coming, He gave hints of what was ahead, but did not spell everything out.
 - a. He didn't want to tip His hand to the devil by clearly stating that He had come to earth to die as a sacrifice for the sins of men (I Cor 2:7-8). Consequently, the meaning of many of His statements became clear only after He was raised from the dead.
 - b. For example, to a people used to using water for ceremonial purification, Jesus introduced the idea of the inward cleansing and purifying power of the Spirit of God and the Word of God.
 - 1. Jesus told them that unless a man is born again (born from above), born of water and the Spirit, He cannot enter the kingdom of God. He told His apostles that, if I don't wash you, you have no part with me, and then He said that they were clean or cleansed through the word He spoke to them. John 3:3-6; John 13:8; John 15:3
 - 2. None of the apostles fully understood yet what Jesus was saying. But He promised that Holy Spirit would bring His Words back to them. John 14:26
 - 3. And, on resurrection day, explained the gospel to them and they believed it. Their sins were remitted, the Holy Spirit regenerated them and they began to remember and understand what Jesus said and did. Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21-23; John 12:16
 - c. After the resurrection they learned that men are born again or become sons of God through the Word and the Spirit. The Spirit of God through the Word of God produces cleansing and transformation in human beings when they believe what God has provided through the Cross.
 - 1. Eph 5:26—Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, that He might present the church to Himself in glorious splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such things—that she might be holy and faultless. (Amp)
 - 2. Titus 3:5—He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. (NLT)
 - d. The Bible uses many word pictures to describe what God does to us and for us when we believe on Jesus—washing, cleansing, regeneration or new birth, and renewal.
 - 1. There is overlap in these word pictures and all fall short to some degree because the writers are trying to describe how the Infinite God interacts with finite men.
 - 2. We could do in depth teachings on each verse, but note the main point: Jesus came and died so that we can be cleansed and transformed inwardly and made faultless and holy.
- 3. John 7:37-38—The year before Jesus was crucified He made this statement in Jerusalem at the annual Feast of Tabernacles: If anyone believes on Me, rivers of living water will flow out of his belly.
 - a. Note the parenthesis around v39. John inserted an editorial comment. He reported that at that time, no one yet had a clear understanding of what Jesus meant. However, by the time John wrote his gospel he and the others knew clearly what Jesus meant because they had experienced it.
 - 1. But notice that John reported that the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus had not yet glorified. The Greek word means to esteem or render glorious. It comes from the Greek word for glory and is used in a wide variety of applications.
 - 2. We could do many lessons on what it means that Jesus was glorified, but here's a simple definition: Jesus rose from the dead and took His seat of honor at the right hand of His Father.
 - b. Jesus' glorification is crucial to God's plan to have a family. Note these statements about it.
 - 1. Rom 4:25—Jesus' glorification (His resurrection from the dead) is proof that our sins are paid for. He took the guilt of our sin on Himself at the Cross and was cut off from God. If one sin was unpaid, He couldn't have come out of the grave and gone into His Father's presence.

2. John 14:17; John 16:7; Acts 2:33—Jesus’ glorification (His seating at the right hand of His Father) opened the way for the Holy Spirit to come and indwell cleansed men and women.
 - A. A quick note: On resurrection day Jesus breathed on the apostles and they received the Spirit, but He told them to wait for another encounter with the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:4-5
 - B. Ten days after Jesus returned to Heaven, they were baptized in the Holy Ghost and went out and began to preach the resurrection and remission of sins to all who repent.
 - C. As we study Acts we see that the first Christians had two distinct experiences with the Holy Spirit. They were born of the Spirit and then filled or baptized with the Spirit. Acts 2:1-4; Acts 8:14-16; Acts 9:1-17; Acts 10:43-48; Acts 19:1-7
- c. John 12:23-24—Shortly before His crucifixion Jesus said the time had come for Him to be glorified. In a statement that His listeners did not fully understand yet, He referred to what would precede His glorification (His death) and to what the outcome would be (it would bring forth much fruit).
 1. Heb 2:9-10—Jesus tasted death for every man so that He could bring many sons to glory. It was fitting that he (the Father), for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation (Jesus) perfect through suffering (v10, ESV).
 2. The author of the epistle is making the point that, because Jesus became man and suffered, He learned by experience what it is like to suffer. This prepared Him to be a merciful and faithful High Priest for His people. v17-18
 3. Notice that as the author makes his point, he informs us as to why Christ died—to bring sons to glory: guiding his many children to his glorious salvation (Goodspeed); into glory (Amp).
 - A. Mankind was created for a glorious position—relationship with Almighty God as sons who glorify their Father. God crowned man with glory and honor. Ps 8:5
 - B. Because of sin, mankind has fallen from the glorious position for which we were created. Rom 3:23—And all fall short of God’s glorious ideal (20th Cent); All have sinned and are falling short of the honor and glory which God bestows and receives (Amp).
3. Eph 1:4-5—God’s plan, since before He created the heavens and the earth, was and is to have a family of holy, righteous sons and daughters. When sin thwarted the plan, God devised a way to restore the family to its glorious position through Jesus. Rom 8:29-30 gives us more insight into God’s plan.
 - a. v29—For those whom He foreknew—of whom He was aware and loved beforehand—He also destined from the beginning (foreordaining them) to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the first-born among many brethren (Amp)
 1. God desires sons and daughters who are conformed to the image of Christ—like Jesus in character and power, holiness and love. Jesus, in His humanity, is the pattern for God’s family.
 2. He is “the Eldest in a vast family of brothers (Weymouth), sons who are glorified (pleasing to their Father in every way) sons who are restored to their created purpose, restored to glory.
 - b. v30—And those whom He thus fore-ordained He also called, and those whom He called He also justified—acquitted, made righteous, putting them into right standing with Himself. And those whom He justified He also glorified—raising them to a heavenly dignity and condition [state of being] (Amp); He honored and glorified them (Clarke).
 1. Justification is a legal term. When a person believes on Jesus and His sacrifice, he is declared to be righteous and acceptable before God. Justification changes your relationship to God. Justification makes it possible for God to deal with us as though we never sinned.
 2. Glorification is a process of transformation accomplished by the indwelling Holy Spirit that will ultimately free every part of our being from the effects of sin. To be glorified means to be made alive with eternal life, the life in God, the Spirit of God.
 - A. Glorification begins with new birth, when the Spirit of God indwells you and regenerates your nature, changing you from sinner to son. Titus 3:5

- B. Then the Holy Spirit through the Word of God glorifies or begins a work of progressive cleansing in your mind, emotions, and actions known as sanctification. II Cor 3:18
 - B. Finally, your body will be glorified or raised from the dead and made incorruptible and immortal. Phil 3:20-21; I Cor 15:52-53
 - c. A process is underway right now. We're finished works in progress, fully God's sons and daughters, but not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ in every part of our being. I John 3:2
 - 1. God deals with you on the basis of the finished part finished—your new identity as son or daughter—because He knows that the process will be completed if you stay faithful to Him.
 - 2. Heb 2:11—For both He who is purifying them and those who are being purified all spring from one Father, so He is not ashamed to call them brethren. (Williams)
- C. Conclusion: Back to the statement: Blessed are the peacemakers. Jesus made this statement early in His ministry in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:9). We'll say more about the Sermon on the Mount next week. But for now, consider these thoughts in connection with keeping Jesus' words in context.
- 1. Jesus' listeners (Old Testament men) would have been familiar with the prophet Isaiah who wrote that there is no peace for the wicked. They also knew that no unrighteous people will be allowed in God's kingdom. Isa 48:22; Isa 57:21; Ps 24:3-4; Ps 15:1-5; etc.
 - a. Jesus' audiences were not interested in how to bring an end to war in this world. They wanted to know how to get rid of their sin and obtain the righteousness that they needed to get into God's kingdom on earth.
 - b. Isa 32:17—These people also knew from Isaiah that the effect of righteousness or rightness with God would be peace, quietness, and assurance forever.
 - 2. Jesus came to earth to bring peace between God and man, to justify men and restore men to right relationship with God—or make them righteous.
 - a. We referred earlier in the lesson to Rom 4:25. It says that Jesus was raised from the dead because our justification was accomplished. The Bible was not originally written in chapters and verses. They were added in the Middle Ages for reference purposes.
 - 1. Note the next statement Paul made. Remember, he was taught the gospel by Jesus Himself (Gal 1:11-12). Rom 5:1—Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.
 - 2. The word “therefore” connects what Paul is about to say with what he has just said. He has just said that Jesus was able to come out of death because we were justified or declared not guilty. The word justified means acquitted, all charges dropped because there's no evidence. Col 2:14
 - b. Because we are now justified we have peace with God. We now have access to God and stand in His grace. And we can rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. v2—So let us exult in our hope of attaining God's glorious ideal (20th Cent).
 - 1. The indwelling presence of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of adoption (all titles of the Holy Spirit, Rom 8:9; Rom 8:15) is the promise that we will one day be fully conformed to the image of Christ.
 - 2. Col 1:27—Christ in you, the promise of glorification (Goodspeed); Christ in you, your hope of glorification (Williams). He who has begun a good work in you will complete it (Phil 1:6).
 - 3. Jesus was not talking about peacemakers who negotiate and work for peace between nations. Warfare is a manifestation of fallen men. Warfare will not end until the world is populated only by sons of God. In fact, Jesus said that one of the signs that His return is near will be increasing warfare. Matt 24:6
 - a. Peacemaker means an ambassador who comes to bring peace. Sons of God are ambassadors who implore men and women to be reconciled to God through faith in Christ. II Cor 5:20-21
 - b. Blessed are the peacemakers!! We have much more to say next week!!