

## DON'T JUDGE

- A. Introduction: The Bible has a lot to say about world conditions just prior to the return of Jesus to this earth. Among other things, God's Word reveals that there will be false christs and false prophets who preach false gospels. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23-24
1. According to the Bible, at the time of the second coming, a global government, economy, and religion will be in place, and this world order will embrace the ultimate false christ—the Antichrist. Rev 13:1-18
    - a. In this series we're looking at Jesus as He is revealed in the Bible—who He is, why He came, and what message He preached. Our goal is to become so familiar with the genuine Christ that we easily recognize counterfeits. God's Word is our protection against deception. Ps 91:4; Eph 6:11
    - b. A universal antichrist religion is presently under development. This religion seems to be Christian because it makes reference to Bible verses. However, these verses are taken out of context, misinterpreted, and misapplied.
      1. For several weeks, we've been discussing what it means to read the Bible in context. There is a historical and cultural context to the Bible. Real people wrote to other real people about real events and real issues. Everything was written by someone to someone about something.
      2. These three factors set context. Verses cannot mean something to us that they would not have meant to the first hearers and readers.
  2. In recent weeks we've been looking at the Sermon on the Mount to help us see the importance of the historical and cultural context in interpreting Scripture. We continue in this lesson.
- B. When Jesus came to earth He was born into 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism, to Old Covenant men and women whose lives were governed by the Law of Moses. Jesus' ministry prior to His crucifixion was a time of transition.
1. Although Jesus was dealing with people under the Old Covenant, much of what He taught was aimed at preparing them to receive the New Covenant, or new relationship between God and man. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus was going to open the way for men and women to become sons and daughters of God. John 1:12-13
    - a. Part of Jesus' preparation included broadening their understanding in several specific areas.
      1. His audiences knew from the writings of their prophets that the Messiah was going to establish the kingdom of God on earth (Dan 2:44; Dan 7:27). However, the prophets weren't clearly shown that God's visible kingdom would be preceded by the kingdom or reign of God in the hearts of men through new birth (Luke 17:20-21; John 3:3-5).
      2. Jesus' audiences knew from the prophets that only the righteous can enter the kingdom of God (Ps 24:3-4; Ps 15:1-5). But everything they knew about righteousness came from the scribes and Pharisees—religious leaders who preached and practiced a false concept of righteousness.
      3. And, because 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews had no concept of an individual Father-son relationship between God and man, Jesus had to prepare them for the new relationship He was going to establish.
    - b. Most of the Sermon on the Mount is an elaboration of a key statement: Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will not enter the kingdom of Heaven. Matt 5:20
      1. The scribes and Pharisees looked holy and virtuous—above what the average person could do. But they had an external righteousness. It was not a religion of the heart. They relied on external performance but missed the spirit behind the Law of God—love God and love your fellow man.
      2. They were more concerned with details than principles and actions rather than motives. They established rules and regulations and missed the point—love God and love your fellow man.
  2. For example, the Law of Moses instructed men to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest, refreshment, and remembrance of all God's covenant blessings (Ex 20:8-11; Deut 5:13-15). By Jesus' day the concept of

the Sabbath had changed. Through the centuries ancient rabbis added regulations (traditions) that obscured the spirit of the day. They developed 39 categories of work prohibited on the Sabbath.

- a. Matt 8:16—According to their traditions, unless a life was in danger or there was acute pain, healing was not allowed on the Sabbath. Because people were afraid of breaking rabbinic tradition on the Sabbath, many of them came to Jesus for healing at sunset (which was the start of a new day).
  - b. John 9:6-16—Jesus angered the Pharisees when He mixed clay and spittle into a paste for a blind man. By doing so He broke the Sabbath Law against making mixtures for medicinal purposes.
  - c. Luke 13:10-16—He angered the Pharisees when He healed a crippled woman by loosing her. The word means to untie a knot. The rabbis forbade untying knots on the Sabbath if they had a certain number of loops—unless you could untie the knot with one hand. Jesus laid both hands on her.
    1. Jesus exposed their hypocrisy by pointing out that they loosed livestock from stalls on the Sabbath so they can drink, stating that it's right to loose a woman from bondage on that day.
    2. Through their rules and regulations, the leaders missed the spirit behind the Law—love God and love your fellow men.
3. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus emphasized that true righteousness comes from the heart and that true righteous living is aimed at pleasing God our Father in Heaven. We've covered these main points.
- a. Matt 5:3-20—Jesus opened His sermon by listing the spiritual traits demonstrated by citizens of the kingdom. He described people who recognize their sin, are sorrowful over it, and ready to submit to God. They will receive righteousness. As they grow, they'll learn to show mercy to others and live holy lives in fellowship with God, as they spread the gospel of peace between God and man.
  - b. Matt 5:21-48—Then, using six examples from the Law (murder, adultery, divorce, oath taking, retaliation, and loving your fellow man) Jesus challenged the Pharisees' misinterpretation of the Law and presented His interpretation, the true interpretation of the Law.
  - c. Matt 6:1-34—Jesus revealed that false righteousness lives to be seen of and impress men, whereas true righteousness lives for the glory of God, in submission to and dependence on Him. He urged His audience to live with the consciousness that their Heavenly Father will take care of His children as they store up treasure in Heaven, have a single eye (singleness of purpose), and seek first His kingdom. Each statement is an expression of the same idea—live for your Father's glory.
- C. Matt 7:1-12—As Jesus finished telling His audience to live their lives with the awareness that they have a Father in Heaven who cares for them, He moved on to with how to treat their fellow man in light of that fact.
1. v1-5—Jesus began with the subject of judging others. Today, many misinterpret His words to mean that if you believe someone's behavior is inappropriate in any way, then you're judging them, and you're a hater. His opening statement (judge not) is an example of a verse taken out of its historical context.
    - a. The Greek word translated judge literally means to separate or distinguish between good and bad and to form an opinion after distinguishing. Jesus wasn't teaching His listeners not to judge or not to distinguish between good and bad. If He were doing that then they couldn't obey v15 where He admonished them to be alert to and recognize false prophets.
    - b. Rather, Jesus told them how to judge. He warned them against harsh, critical, condemning judgment done from a position of superiority (like what the Pharisees did). They condemned others while excusing themselves. Remember, Jesus had the Pharisees in mind as He spoke.
      1. Jesus referred to the man in the example as a hypocrite—His main charge against the Pharisees.
        - A. The man seems to be serving the cause of righteousness by dealing with sin and seems to want to help the other fellow remove the speck from his eye.
        - B. But, since he's a hypocrite, those can't be his true motives. If righteousness was his true concern he would first deal with what he has direct control over—his own flaws.
      2. Jesus said that the Pharisees and scribes were proud and exalted themselves above others (Luke

- 18:9-14). They missed the spirit behind the Law in regard to their fellow man (Luke 11:42). They condemned the guiltless (Matt 12:1-7).
3. Jesus told His audience to be aware that the way they judge others is the way they'll be judged. When you judge others, you prove that you are aware that there is right and wrong. So, if you don't do what is right (which the Pharisees didn't), you condemn yourself by judging others.
- b. v6 seems to be out of place. But, if we take it in context it makes sense. Jesus has just said "Don't be condemning, don't deal with people from a position of superiority," as the Pharisees do. But, He is not telling His listeners not to be discriminating.
1. Had Jesus stopped with v5, His audience could have concluded that they must never exercise any judgment at all. But, they (we) have to be able to see motes and beams in order to recognize sin, unrighteousness, false teachings, etc.
  2. Jesus still has the Pharisees in mind. He knew that they were going to reject Him and His teaching and urge the people to do the same under threat of excommunication. John 9:22-34
    - A. Jesus was preparing His listeners for that controversy. He has already warned them that the true righteousness of the kingdom will bring persecution from the same kind of people who killed the prophets—namely, the Pharisees. Matt 5:11-12; Matt 23:29-33
    - B. Jesus warned that, to the Pharisees, the message of the kingdom will be like holy things to dogs and pearls to swine—totally inappropriate. Not only will the Pharisees not receive it, they'll turn on you, trample you, and tear you.
- c. We could do a series on the subject of judging others because the epistles (which explain in greater detail concepts that Jesus only introduced) have much to say about how to judge. Consider these thoughts in connection our current topic of being able to recognize false christs and gospels.
1. The fact that we've reached the point in our culture where no one can say that a behavior is wrong without being labeled a "judgy hater" indicates how close we are to the Lord's return.
  2. Matt 24:12—In the same sermon where Jesus said that religious deception will abound before He returns, He also said that lawlessness (iniquity in the KJV) will abound. Lawlessness is rejection of authority.
    - A. Rom 1:25—The ultimate authority and standard of right and wrong is Almighty God. This concept has been eroded as the world increasingly rejects God and His standard of righteousness. The idea that there is objective truth has been replaced by the idea that we all have a truth and all truths are equally valid even if they are contradictory.
    - B. II Tim 3:5—This rejection of ultimate truth (God and His Word) has been elevated to a religious level that claims "non-judgers" are more loving and tolerant than Christians.
2. In the next portion of His sermon (v7-11) it appears as though Jesus has changed topics, moving from how to treat others to how to pray. But, that's not the case. Note that v1-11 are followed by therefore.
- a. v12—Therefore, in light of what I've just said (v7-11), when you see a mote in someone's eye, or find fault in another (v1-6), treat him as you want to be treated when you have a mote or flaw.
  - b. In v7-11 Jesus restated what He told them earlier: You have a Father in Heaven who will hear and answer your prayer. He assured them that they can ask with certainty because it will be given, they will find, and it will be opened.
    1. Jesus told them that just as a human father does not refuse the request of his children, so your Heavenly Father will not refuse your requests.
    2. Jesus wasn't teaching them techniques on how to get an answer to your prayer. He was preparing them for the coming change in their relationship with God. Through the Cross and the new birth, God will become their Father—and He's a good Father.
  - c. v12—Therefore, since your Heavenly Father deals with you in mercy and grace, how can you not treat each other right? Jesus has already told His audience that their Heavenly Father is kind to the

evil and the good and that His children express their Father through the way they treat people (5:45-48). He has linked forgiving each other with God's forgiveness—forgive as He forgives (6:12; 14-15).

3. In His sermon Jesus was broadening their understanding of the righteousness needed to enter the kingdom of God. As He spoke, Jesus introduced another revolutionary concept to them.
    - a. Not only are the Pharisees not the standard of righteousness, your Father in Heaven is the standard.
      1. Remember that no one in Jesus' audience was a son of God yet. (No one could be born of God until the price for sin was paid.) Jesus was preparing His listeners for what was to come.
      2. The idea that sons of God act like their Father is a theme that will be elaborated on in the epistles. Eph 5:1; I Pet 1:14-16; etc.
    - b. His listeners don't know it yet, but Jesus was going to go to the Cross, pay for sin, making it possible for men and women to be born of God—to receive His Spirit and life in their innermost being.
      1. The Cross and the new birth will make men righteous because God Himself will become their righteousness (lessons for another day). I John 5:1; II Cor 5:21; I Cor 1:30; Rom 3:26; etc.
      2. God's indwelling presence (through His Spirit) will also provide the power that they need to live as holy, righteous sons and daughters who keep the spirit of the Law of God. Rom 8:3-4
      3. Later statements made by Jesus, along with statements in the epistles, will make it clear that sons of God express their love for their Father through how they treat others. God's entire Law is summed up in: Love Him and love your fellow man. I John 4:7-21
  4. Back to our present topic—how Bible verses are taken out of context, misinterpreted, and misapplied.
    - a. Matt 7:12 is often referred to as the Golden Rule. It is increasingly common to hear people say that we all just need to live by this rule. Then there would be peace in this world.
      1. The problem is that fallen man can't live by the Golden Rule. In our fallenness, we are self-focused or selfish by nature. We must chose to surrender to Almighty God and have our nature transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can live lives that glorify God.
      2. Fallen man does what the Pharisees did. They set their own standard of righteousness by adding to the Law, lived by that, and declared themselves to be good people. II Tim 3:5
      3. A righteous life comes from the heart. God promised that in the New Covenant He would write His laws in men's hearts (Jer 31:33). That only happens when we acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord and are born of God.
    - b. Luke 6:38 is often used at offering time in churches to encourage people to give financially to the gospel. However, the verse has nothing to do with money.
      1. This verse is located in part of Luke's recounting of the Sermon on the Mount (v20-49). The original hearers did not hear Jesus say: Dig deep into your pockets because, the more money you give, the more money you will get. Jesus didn't talk about money in His sermon.
      2. This verse occurs in the portion of the where Jesus told His audience to treat people like their Father in Heaven does. It has nothing to do with money. In Luke 6:35-38 Jesus made it clear that what you give out to others in terms of judgment you'll get back and more from other people (lessons for another day).
- D. Conclusion: We have lots more to say next week. But consider these thoughts as we close.
1. A gospel that doesn't call men and women to holy living is not the true gospel. A gospel that emphasizes external performance without inward change isn't the true gospel.
  2. If ever there was a time to know how to read Bible verses in context so that you can recognize misinterpreted and misapplied verses, it's now. That is our protection against deception.