

REMEMBER CONTEXT

- A. Introduction: The second coming of Jesus draws closer with the passing of each day. The Bible has much to say about the condition of the world when He returns. Jesus Himself warned that there will be false christs and false prophets who preach false gospels. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23-24
1. The Bible reveals that when Jesus returns there will be a worldwide system in place, presided over by the ultimate false christ, a Satan empowered ruler known as Antichrist. Rev 13:1-18; II Thess 2:3-10; etc.
 - a. This ruler will be Satan’s counterfeit of Jesus (anti means against or in place of). The world will welcome this man and worship him as the true savior of mankind (lots of lessons for other days).
 - b. These circumstances will not come out of a vacuum. They are setting up now as traditionally Christian nations increasingly abandon Judeo-Christian morals and beliefs and the world moves increasingly toward globalism.
 1. A universal antichrist religion that will welcome the final world ruler is currently developing. Although this religion is fundamentally opposed to orthodox Christianity, it sounds “Christian” because it cites some Bible verses.
 2. This new form of “Christianity” seems much more loving and non-judgmental than orthodox Christianity because it maintains that what you believe and how you live is less important than the fact that you are spiritual, sincere, and trying to be a good person.
 2. In this series we are looking at Jesus as He is revealed in Scripture—who He is, why He came, and what He preached. Our goal is to become so familiar with the genuine Savior and genuine gospel that we can quickly recognize counterfeits.
 - a. There is great misunderstanding about who Jesus is, why He came, and what message He preached, not just among unbelievers, but among those who profess to be Christians. This ignorance makes people extremely vulnerable to false christs, false prophets, and false gospels.
 - b. It is becoming more and more common to hear these kinds of statements: Jesus was a good man, a teacher and a moral leader who came to teach us to love each other and to get along with each other as we work to make this world a better place.
 1. To those unfamiliar with what the Bible says, these statements sound right. But they’re based on lack of knowledge along with verses taken out of context, misinterpreted, and misapplied.
 2. If a supposed gospel doesn’t acknowledge the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin or that He is God then it’s not the true gospel (Matt 1:22). Remember what we said in previous lessons.
 - A. God is one God who simultaneously manifests as three distinct persons—the Father, the Son (or the Word), and the Holy Spirit. They are distinct, not separate. They co-inhere or share one Divine nature. This mystery of the Godhead is beyond our comprehension.
 1. Two thousand years ago the Word became fully man without ceasing to be fully God. Jesus is the Son of God, not because He was born in Bethlehem, but because He is God. In Bible times the phrase son of was often used to mean one who possesses his his father’s qualities or of the order of. I Kings 20:35; II Kings 2:3; 5; 7; 15; etc.
 2. When Jesus said He was the Son of God, He was stating that He is God. That’s how the Jews to whom Jesus spoke understood it. John 5:25; John 9:35-37; John 11:4; John 5:17-18; John 10:30-33
 - B. Two thousand years ago the Word became fully man without ceasing to be God. He was and is the visible manifestation of God in human form. Heb 1:3
 3. We’ll discuss this more fully in the new year, but the best thing you can do for your own protection against deception is to become a regular reader of the New Testament—not just verses, but all of it, cover to cover. God’s Word is our protection. Ps 91:4; Eph 6:11; etc.
 3. For several weeks we’ve been talking about learning how to read Bible verses in context. Context

involves more than looking at the verses just before and after the one you are considering. There is a historical and cultural context to the Bible.

- a. Everything in the Bible was written by someone (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) to someone about something. Real people wrote to other real people about real issues. These three factors set the context. Bible verses cannot mean something to us that they would never have meant to the people to whom they were first written or spoken.
- b. Understanding context is also tied to understanding the big picture (God’s overall plan for man) along with the purpose of the Bible. When you are familiar with God’s plan and the purpose of the Bible, it helps you recognize when verses are taken out of context and misapplied. That is what we want to begin to deal with in this lesson.

- B. God’s purpose for mankind is that we become His sons and daughters through faith in Christ and then bring honor and glory to Him as we reflect His character to the world around us. Eph 1:4-5; Eph 1:12; etc.
 1. Almighty God created the heavens and the earth as a home for His family (Gen 1-2). But the first man Adam disobeyed God and introduced sin, corruption, and death to the human race resident in him. As a result, a race of sinners was born from him and his wife. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19; etc.
 - a. This turn of events didn’t take God by surprise. He already had a plan in mind to deal with the fall of mankind into sin and death. This plan is known as redemption.
 1. God Himself would come to earth, take on flesh, and die for the sins of men and make it possible for sinners to be transformed into holy, righteous sons and daughters when they put faith in Him and His sacrifice. Heb 2:9-15; I John 4:10; etc.
 - A. God’s first gospel (or proclamation of good news), His first promise to mankind, was the coming of a Redeemer (Jesus) who would undo the damage done by sin and open the way for God the Father to have His family. Gen 3:15
 - B. If you don’t understand the bad news—the fact that we are born into a fallen race, all of us are guilty of sin before a holy God and powerless to do anything about it—then you can’t appreciate the good news.
 2. This is the context in which individual verses must be interpreted. A gospel that doesn’t acknowledge man’s sin or need for a Savior is not the true gospel. It is a counterfeit.
 - b. The Bible is a collection of 66 books and epistles (letters) 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 the Cross of Christ. Every book and letter adds to or advances the story in some way.
 1. The Bible is not a collection of independent verses. Chapter and verse divisions were not part of the original texts. They were added in the Middle Ages for reference purposes. Every verse is consistent with the overall theme and all the verses fit with each other.
 2. If you come across a verse that seems to contradict what a number of other verses clearly state, don’t throw out the ten clear verses. Presume that you don’t yet have full understanding of that one verse and “put it on the shelf” until you grow in understanding.
 2. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith: “You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ” (II Tim 3:15, NLT).
 - a. The Bible makes us wise unto salvation (as the KJV says) because it reveals Jesus—who He is, why He came, and what He accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection.
 1. Speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus said: “You search the Scriptures because you believe they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me so that I can give you this eternal life” (John 5:39-40, NLT).
 2. On resurrection day: “Jesus quoted passages from the writings of Moses and all the prophets

(the Old Testament), explaining what all the Scriptures said about himself” (Luke 24:27, NLT).

- b. The four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are biographies—eyewitness accounts of Jesus, from the beginning of His ministry to His crucifixion and resurrection. Although they cover the same basic story line, each is written to different audiences for different purposes.
 1. For example, Matthew wrote his gospel to a Jewish audience to persuade them that Jesus is the promised Messiah. It is located at the beginning of the New Testament—not because it was written first (Mark’s was)—but because it is a bridge between the Old and New Testament.
 - A. Matthew opened with a genealogy showing that Jesus is a direct descendent of Abraham and David as the prophets foretold the Messiah would be. Matt 1:1-17
 - B. He quoted more and alluded to the Old Testament more than any other New Testament book as he demonstrated that Jesus fulfilled the qualifications for the Messiah. His is the only gospel to use the phrase “that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled”. The first time was in reference to Jesus’ birth. Matt 1:22
 - C. Matthew informed his readers that Jesus was born into this world and that His conception was supernatural—the work of the Holy Ghost (Matt 1:18). Matthew reported that an angel (Gabriel) instructed both Joseph and Mary to name Him Jesus, which means Savior, because He will save His people from their sins (Matt 1:21).
 1. Note that this was Matthew’s understanding of who Jesus is and why He came to earth. Remember that Matthew was a three year close associate with and an eyewitness to Jesus, His teachings and His works.
 2. His book and its verses are consistent with the overall purpose and theme of the Bible—to make men wise unto the salvation from sin that comes through Jesus Christ. Every verse in the Bible is someone consistent with this purpose and theme.
 2. Note this one point from the apostle John’s gospel. Referring to why he reported the events he was inspired to record in his gospel, he said, “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life” (John 20:31, NLT).
 - c. Many people have the idea that the Bible is a collection of wise and witty sayings that can help us solve our problems, be happy, and fulfill our dreams. I’m not saying that you can’t get insight into those issues from the Bible, but that’s not why it was written.
 1. It was written to reveal Jesus and the salvation He has provided for all who put faith in Him. Salvation is about being delivered from sin, its penalty and power, and then being transformed into a son or daughter of God who lives a life that is glorifying to your heavenly Father.
 2. 21st century Christianity has unfortunately absorbed many of the values of the ungodly culture around us. The emphasis in the modern western world is self-focused. Life is about fulfilling our dreams, achieving our goals, and living our best life.
 - A. But, according to the New Testament, Jesus died to turn us away from living for self and turn us to living for God. This means that our primary desire is to be pleasing to Him, to do His will His way. II Cor 5:15
 - B. The developing false church mentioned earlier proclaims a gospel of helping the poor and the downtrodden with no mention of inward transformation or holy living. II Tim 3:5
 1. Any gospel that emphasizes man’s good over God’s glory is not the true gospel.
 2. Our service to others has to be connected to and come out of first and foremost, our love for God which is expressed through keeping His commands (more on this later).
- C. Let’s connect this to what we’ve been talking about for the past several weeks—the historical and cultural context of the Bible.

1. Remember that Jesus came first to Old Covenant men and women who were expecting a Redeemer (the Messiah) to come and establish the kingdom of God on earth. They knew from the prophets that they must have righteousness to enter the kingdom. Dan 2:44; Dan 7:27; Ps 24:3-4; Ps 15:1-5; etc.
 - a. We discussed the fact that Jesus' three and a half year ministry was transitional. He was not talking to or about Christians. He was preparing Old Covenant people to receive the new relationship that He would establish between God and men through the Cross—that of Father and son.
 1. We further said that Jesus had to broaden their understanding of the kingdom of God. It would first be the inward reign or kingdom of God in their hearts through the new birth. Luke 17:20-21
 2. And He had to broaden their understanding of righteousness—that it was more than external actions practiced by the Pharisees. True righteousness comes from the heart. John 3:3-6
 - b. His audiences did not yet know when He spoke to them that He was going to go to the Cross, pay for sin, and open the way for men to become sons and daughters of God through receiving the life and Spirit of God into their innermost being. God Himself would become their (our) righteousness.
 1. We further pointed out that in His teachings Jesus introduced concepts that He would later elaborate on to His apostles after His resurrection. Acts 1:1-3
 2. Some of the apostles were inspired to write the epistles that explain what Jesus accomplished through His death and resurrection. These letters spell out what Christians must believe and how we are supposed to live and behave.
 2. The apostle Paul wrote more epistles than anyone else (14 out of 21). He wasn't one of the original twelve. Paul was converted about three years after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to him as he traveled to the city of Damascus, Syria. Acts 9:1-6
 - a. Jesus appeared to Paul a number of times following his conversion and personally taught Paul the gospel that he preached. Acts 26:16; Gal 1:11-12
 1. Paul was born an Old Covenant Jew and raised as a Pharisee—the system and leadership group that Jesus addressed and exposed in the Sermon on the Mount. What kind of Pharisee was Paul? He declared himself righteous according to the Law and became an ardent persecutor of Christians. Phil 3:4-6
 2. But all that changed when Paul encountered Jesus. Phil 3:7-9—I want to be found in Him, not having my own righteousness—but the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ.
 - b. When we read Paul's letters we see certain themes that are repeated over and over. They give us a clear understanding of what the gospel and salvation meant to the first followers of Jesus. Our interpretation of the gospel and salvation has to be consistent with their understanding.
 1. Paul said the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16). That salvation is salvation from sin. Jesus came to save sinners (I Tim 1:15).
 2. Paul defined the gospel as the preaching of the Cross and the fact that Jesus died for our sin according to the Scriptures (I Cor 1:17-18; I Cor 15:1-4).
 3. He reported that righteousness is a gift we received from God through faith in Christ (Rom 5:17). We're saved from sin and its penalty, not by our works of righteousness, but by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).
 - c. We could do a series on these concepts. Here's the point for our present discussion. This is the context of the passage written in the New Testament. A true gospel must be consistent with these overall themes. When you read the New Testament you will see these themes over and over.
- D. Conclusion: Consider one thought as we close. We can't possibly address every false idea that's floating around in society and in parts of the church. But we can look at Jesus as He is revealed in Scripture by men who walked and talked with Him until we are so familiar with the genuine Savior and the genuine gospel that we can quickly recognize the counterfeit. Lots more next week!