

## LIFE IN JESUS

- A. Introduction: In this series we're stressing the importance of reading the Bible systematically, especially the New Testament. To read systematically means to read each book from start to finish until you are familiar with them all. Understanding comes with familiarity and familiarity comes with regular, repeated reading.
1. If ever there was a time to know for yourself what the Bible, says, it's now. Jesus warned that before He returns false christs and false prophets will arise and deceive many. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23
    - a. To be deceived means to believe a lie. Our only source of protection against deception is truth—accurate knowledge from the Truth, the written Word of God which reveals Jesus, the Living Word.
    - b. For the past several weeks we've been focusing on who Jesus is and why He came to earth according to the New Testament. The New Testament was written by eyewitnesses of Jesus, men who walked and talked with Him, saw Him die, and then saw Him alive again.
  2. Last week we began to make the point that to understand who Jesus is and why He came to earth we must consider Him and His mission in terms of the big picture or God's overall plan for humankind.
    - a. God created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Him and He made the earth to be a home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18
      1. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin, beginning with the first man, Adam. Adam's disobedience altered human nature, and men and women became sinners by nature, disqualified for God's family, and cut off from God. The earth itself was infused with a curse of corruption and death. Rom 5:19; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 8:20
      2. Rom 5:12—When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. His sin spread death throughout all the world, so everything began to grow old and die, for all sinned (TLB).
    - b. God devised a plan to reclaim His family and the family home through Jesus. This plan is called redemption. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay for sin at the Cross and make it possible for sinners to become sons and daughters of God. He will come again in the not too distant future to cleanse and renew the earth and restore it to a fit forever home for God and His family. Rev 21-22
  3. The Bible changes our perspective by giving us the big picture. God's Word helps us recognize that this world in its present condition isn't the way God intended it to be, nor is it the highlight of our existence.
    - a. I realize we all have problems that we want fixed. Sadly, far too many of us mistakenly believe that Jesus came to make this world a better place and give us all a good life. And, when life doesn't go as expected, many people get mad at God.
      1. There's no such thing as a problem free life in this sin damaged world. However, the Bible will help us navigate through life's challenges with hope, peace, and joy. John 16:33
      2. Some problems are easily solved, but others are not. Some problems won't be fully solved until the life to come. The Bible reveals that God is able to use the hardships of life and cause them to serve His ultimate purpose for a family on this earth once it has been made new.
      3. (For more information on these points read my books: *Why Did This Happen? What Is God Doing?* and *The Best Is Yet To Come; What The Bible Says About Heaven.*)
    - b. People who are angry with God because of life's hardships are not only robbed of hope in the midst of trouble, they are more susceptible to deception. That's why we need to see the big picture.
      1. The Bible assures us that no one ceases to exist at death, the longer part of our life is after this life, and everything in this life is temporary and subject to change by God's power, some now and some in the life to come. Nothing bigger than God can come against us, and He will get us
      2. The Bible assures us that a plan is unfolding that will result in a full restoration of God's family and the family home when Jesus returns, and life will finally and forever be all that we hope for.
  4. In this lesson we're going to look at why Jesus came into this world—according to the New Testament—so that we have realistic expectations about what He will and won't do for us right now.

- B. We're looking at the Gospel of John written by John, one of Jesus' earliest followers. By the time John wrote his book, almost fifty years after Jesus returned to Heaven (AD 80-90), false teachers had begun to deny Jesus' deity and His incarnation. John wrote his gospel to clearly demonstrate that Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. Let's see what this eyewitness had to say about why Jesus came.
1. John 1:1-18—John opened his book with a prologue (introduction) and presents Jesus (whom He calls the Word) as a pre-existent Eternal Being who is the Creator of the universe (John 1:1-3).
    - a. John further states that the Word was made flesh (took on a human nature) and lived among us. John refers to Jesus as the Only Begotten of the Father (John 1:14). The Greek word translated begotten (*monogenes*) means unique or one of a kind.
    - b. Jesus is unique (or one of a kind) because He is the God-man, fully God and fully man. He is unique because He is the only Man whose birth did not mark His beginning.
  2. John 1:4—Once John states that Jesus is God, the first fact he gives about Jesus is that in Him there is life and that life is the light of men. Jesus came into this world to bring life to men and women.
    - a. The Greek language has several words for life. John used the word *zoe*. He used this word 37 times in his gospel. This word (*zoe*) is used for life as God has it, the uncreated, eternal life in God.
    - b. God wants humans to be more than creatures created by Him. He wants us to be partakers of the life in Him. God made human beings in such a way that we can receive His Spirit, into our being.
      1. Because of sin we are cut off from the life in God (Eph 4:18). The Bible refers to men and women who separated from God because of sin as dead (Eph 2:1).
      2. John 20:30-31—John wrote his gospel so people will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and have life (*zoe*) through His name.
    - c. The term eternal (everlasting) life as John uses it John does not mean live forever life. Human beings already have eternal life in the sense that once they are conceived, they never cease to exist. The only question is where will they live? Forever with God or forever separated from Him?
      1. Eternal life is the uncreated life in God Himself: John 5:26—The Father has life in himself, and he has granted his Son to have life in himself (NLT).
      2. I John 5:11-12—And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. So whoever has God's Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life (NLT).
      3. I John 1:1-2—The one who existed from the beginning is the one we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is Jesus Christ, the Word of life (*zoe*). This one who is life (*zoe*) from God was shown to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and announce to you that he is the one who is eternal life (*zoe*) (NLT).
  3. The New Testament uses the terminology born again or born of God to picture what happens when a person believes on Jesus—spiritual life (the life in God, the life of God) is imparted to them and they become partakers of the life in God.
    - a. John, in his gospel prologue, wrote: But to all who believed in him (the Word) 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 (John 1:12-13, NLT).
    - b. Sadly, in our time, well meaning but misguided people have taken John 10:10 out of context and cited it to say that Jesus came to give us a wonderful life in this life—specifically an abundant life.
      1. But that's not how the first hearers and readers would have heard this statement. The Greek word translated life is *zoe*. John 10:10 is the 27<sup>th</sup> time the word *zoe* is used in John's gospel. And, up to this point it never once means a good life in this life.
      2. Let's take a moment and look at how John used the word life as he quoted Jesus' teachings about why He came into this world.

- C. Jesus came into this world two thousand years ago to pay the penalty for sin through His sacrificial death on the Cross. Prior to the crucifixion, Jesus had a three plus year public ministry. In many ways His ministry was transitional as He prepared men and women to receive a new relationship between God and man—the one He would make possible through His death. Men and women would become sons of God.
1. Jesus was born into the Jewish people. Their life was governed by what is called the Old Covenant, a relationship established between God and these people when He delivered them from Egyptian slavery. (Many lessons for another day).
    - a. The point for now is that before Jesus' death on the Cross no one was born of God, no one was a son of God. The men and women were servants, not sons.
      1. Israel as a people group was sometimes referred to as God's son (Ex 4:22-23), but there was no concept of an individual Father/son relationship between God and His people.
      2. Under the Old Covenant the blood of sacrifice animals covered but did not remove (pay for) sin. No one could be born of God (or receive God's life and Spirit into his being and become a literal son or daughter) until sin was remitted (paid for).
    - b. Jesus began His public ministry by proclaiming that the kingdom of God was near. Based on the writings of the Old Testament prophets, the Jewish people were expecting God to establish His visible kingdom on earth and restore the world to pre-sin conditions. Dan 2:44; Dan 7:27; Isa 53:1
    - c. As Jesus travelled round the region proclaiming His message, He also healed people and cast out devils. Word of Him spread throughout the land. Many believed on Him because of the miracles which He did. Mark 1:14-15; Matt 4:23-24; John 2:23; etc.
  2. John 3:1-6—One night, a Pharisee (a religious leader) named Nicodemus came to Jesus and professed that no man could do what Jesus was doing unless God was with Him.
    - a. John 3:1-6—Jesus answered Nicodemus by stating that no one can see or enter the kingdom of God unless they are born again.
      1. The man asked: How can a man reenter his mother's womb and be born again? Jesus made it clear that He wasn't talking about a natural, physical birth, but a spiritual (non-physical) event.
      2. The Greek word translated born again literally means born from above, or born of the Spirit—born of water and the Spirit.
    - b. A quick side note is necessary. Jesus is not teaching that we are saved from sin through water baptism. No one is saved by water. Jesus does not mean natural physical water. He clearly contrasts natural physical birth with a birth the human spirit by the Holy Spirit.
      1. Water is a reference to effect of the Word of God on men's hearts. It has a cleansing or purifying effect. The Word of God concerning salvation from sin through Jesus is preached.
    2. When it is believed, the Spirit of God, through the Word of God imparts life (*zoe*) to a man or a woman's spirit and they are born of God. Eph 5:25-26; I Pet 1:23; James 1:18
    - c. Nicodemus responded: How can these things be (John 3:9)? Jesus said several things (John 3:10-13, lessons for another day). Then Jesus stated: As Moses lifted up the serpent for all to see, so shall the Son of man be lifted up (John 3:14).
      1. Although no one who heard Jesus utter those words that night knew it at the time, lifted up is a reference to Jesus being lifted up on the Cross for all to see. Remember, the Bible is progressive revelation. God gradually revealed His plan of redemption to mankind.
      2. Lifted up is also a historical reference familiar to the listeners. When Israel was headed to Canaan after leaving Egyptian slavery, at one point, many were bitten by poisonous snakes. God instructed Moses to make a replica of a poisonous snake and put it on the top of a pole for all to see. Anyone who was bitten, if they looked on it, recovered and lived. Num 21:4-9
      3. This event was a real event, but it also pictured what Jesus would provide through the Cross. All who look to Him will be saved from the sting of death resulting from sin. Those who believe on Jesus will

not perish but have everlasting life (*zoe*). John 3:15

- a. The men who first heard these words were Old Covenant Jews. They understood everlasting life to mean living forever with God in His kingdom on earth—and they were absolutely correct. But Jesus took it to another level.
    1. Remember, that God gradually revealed His plan of redemption until the full revelation given in and through Jesus.
    2. No one who heard Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus that night knew yet that the Cross of Christ would so thoroughly cleanse men and women from the guilt of sin that He can now indwell all who believe on Him and make them His literal sons and daughters by birth.
  - b. Notice that the one who believes on Jesus (trusts Him for salvation from sin) will not perish. Perish comes from a Greek word that means to destroy. Perish doesn't mean cease to exist (remember, no one ceases to exist). The word is frequently translated lost. Luke 15:4-6; 8-9; Luke 19:10
    1. Those who do not believe on Jesus are lost to their created purpose—to become sons and daughters of God by receiving His life and Spirit through new birth. They are lost to a future with God the Father and His family on this earth after it has been restored.
    2. Note also that this is the context of John 3:16. God, motivated by love, gave His only begotten (unique, one of a kind) Son so that all who believe on Him will have life (*zoe*).
  - c. One more point: Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man (John 3:13). Jesus used this title for Himself more than any of the others. There are a number of implications in this title.
    1. To the Jews, it was a claim of deity. The prophet Daniel wrote that the Son of Man, a Divine figure would come at the end of the world to judge mankind and rule forever. Dan 7:13-14
    2. It is also a reference to Jesus' humanity. He is truly human at the same time that He is truly God. (That's the mystery of the incarnation, I Tim 3:16). Note that Jesus called Himself the Son of Man which is in Heaven (a reference to His dual nature).
  4. Consider two more examples of what the word life means in John's gospel when he refers to the life that Jesus came to bring to humanity. Neither one refers to a prosperous life in this life.
    - a. John 4:10-14—Jesus engaged a Samaritan woman in conversation at a well. In that conversation Jesus told her that He has water that will be in us a well springing up to everlasting live (*zoe*).
    - b. John 6:33; 47-51—Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life (*zoe*). Through believing on Him men and women have everlasting life (*zoe*).
      1. Clearly, Jesus isn't talking about natural water or bread. He's talking about something supernatural and incomprehensible on many levels—the Infinite God indwelling human beings by His life and Spirit. In both instances He referred to Himself as I am. John 4:26; John 6:48;
      2. Jesus used many word pictures (such as water and bread) to describe the effects of the Infinite God in us. His life and Spirit in us affects, changes, and works in us as do bread and water.
- D. Conclusion: Jesus did not come to earth to make this life the highlight of our existence. He came to die for our sin so that all who believe on Him can become sons and daughters of God and then live with Him forever on this earth once it is restored. That's always been the plan. Consider these thoughts as we close.
1. The entrance of His life (*zoe*) is the beginning of a process of transformation that will ultimately restore every part of our being to all that God intended. It will culminate in our dead bodies being raised from the grave so that we can live on earth again—this time forever. (many lessons for another day).
  2. John 1:4—In Him is life and that life is the light of men. When you receive eternal life it opens you up to a whole new kingdom, the kingdom of God. His life brings men and women out of the darkness of sin and death into light and life.
  3. When you understand why Jesus came to earth and what God's ultimate purpose for mankind and the earth is you are better prepared to recognize false christs and false gospels. Much more next week!