

Program Transcripts

For March 2014



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

March 2014

Topics subject to change without notice

MARCH 2 – THE GOD OF THE BIBLE

Who is the God of the Bible and what is He like? If God did, in fact, create us, then we need to know Him. We need to know how we can come into a relationship with Him and what He desires of us.

MARCH 9 – GODS OF THIS WORLD

Idolatry is the worship or adoration of anyone or anything other than the Lord God. In ancient times pagan nations had their own gods whom they worshiped. Do people have idols they worship today?

MARCH 16 – ONE OF A KIND

The Lord Jesus Christ is one of a kind. Though some say He is simply one great spiritual leader among others or He is like other ancient deities, Jesus is indeed unique in His life and in His teaching.

MARCH 23 – A TRUE TESTIMONY

Can we trust what the four gospel accounts say about Jesus? Are the accounts of Jesus' life historically accurate? We have good reason to believe we can trust what the Bible says about the life of Jesus Christ.

MARCH 30 – THE ALL SUFFICIENT WORD

The Scriptures teach us all we need to know to live the Christian life on earth and to have eternal life with God in heaven. The Lord Jesus promised the apostles the Holy Spirit would guide them into all the truth.

The God of the Bible

Who is the God of the Bible and what is He like? Today we're going to take a look at what God reveals about himself. The Bible isn't simply another book; it's God's book, divinely inspired and full of wisdom. Through the Bible God reveals His character, His heart, and His nature. Bible history is truly His story. The Scripture reveals how He created and interacted with man through the centuries. One thing is for sure: God loves everyone and has always wanted what is best for us. This is why we spend our time studying the Bible. Nothing else measures up.

We know many reasons to believe in God: the starry heavens above, the moral law within, the complexity of the cells of our body are only a few. These things couldn't have just happened by accident. No, they came by intelligent design. Only a supremely intelligent and supremely powerful Being could have created them. That person is God! Romans 1:20 says that God's "invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made." We can perceive some things about God from looking at the world, but to know God truly, we must go to Scripture.

If God did in fact, create us, then we need to know Him. We need to know how we can come into a relationship with Him and what He desires from us. We can't find that in the woods or by the seashore; we find God by looking into His divinely revealed Word, the Bible. Only the Bible can help us understand His character, and His nature, and His love for us.

Our reading today comes from Isaiah 40:25-26, "To whom then will you liken Me, That I would be *his* equal?" says the Holy One. 'Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these *stars*, The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of *His* power, Not one of *them* is missing."

How do you view God? J. B. Phillips, many years ago, wrote a book entitled, *Your God Is Too Small*, which created quite a stir. He saw that what many thought God was like and how the Bible describes God were quite different. Many people have never taken the time to study what the Bible actually says about the nature and the character of God. Some simply focus on one aspect of the Lord's nature and ignore other aspects that are just as important. God is gracious, but God is also holy and just. God is compassionate, but He will also punish evildoers who will not repent. God is not lopsided in character. He doesn't have faults like we do.

Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "For My thoughts (God is speaking) are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts." Since we are imperfect and weak creatures, it's hard to understand our Creator who has no imperfections or weaknesses. We'd like to believe that He's just like us, but He isn't. We compromise, but He doesn't. We sin, but He doesn't. We lie to ourselves, but God never lies. He is indeed perfect.

God is not a "force" or simply an immovable object, like some people think. Scripture describes God as a person. He thinks, feels, acts, loves, wills and judges. He has the mind, the emotions, and the will of a person. He can be grieved as He was in Noah's day in Genesis 6. He can love and He showed that love by giving Jesus for our sins. He can rejoice when sinners repent, as He does in Luke chapter 15. He can reason and He asks us to reason with Him in Isaiah 1:18. He can become angry and does so with those who will not repent. God can plan

and prepare for the future. When Jesus prayed, He prayed "Our Father." Christians have a relationship with God as a child would with his father. God made man in His own image, so that man has an intelligent and moral spirit.

When Jesus came to earth, He had flesh and blood; but the Father in heaven and the Holy Spirit are not physical or material. God is spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). God is indeed spirit; and the Lord said, "a spirit does not have flesh and blood" (Luke 24:39). Paul told the philosophers at Athens, "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things" (Acts 17:24-25). God created man. Paul said, "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, or an image formed by the art and thought of man" (Acts 17:29).

Sometimes children ask, "Well, where did God come from?" The answer is that God has always existed. Indeed, He is self-existent. Acts 17:28 says, "in Him we live and move and have our very being." God introduced himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14 as, "I AM WHO I AM." This phrase was revered as the holy name of God by the Israelites. Today we use words like Yahweh or Jehovah to reflect this self-existent nature of God.

God is not only spirit and self-existent, He is also infinite. God does not have the limitations that men have. Space and time cannot limit God. As to time, God is eternal. Moses wrote, "Before the mountains were born, Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psalm 90:2). Second Peter 3:8 says, "But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day." Unlike us, God exists outside of time. He created time for us, but He is not limited by it. Nor is God limited by space. When Solomon finished building the Temple, he said, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27). Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good."

Beyond this, we must confess that God is all-wise and all-knowing. God knows and understands all things about people, about nature, about animals and the universe. Romans 11:33-36 says, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became his counselor? Or who has first given to him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

God is not only all-knowing, He's also all-powerful. The Lord Jesus said, "With God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27). Job 42:2 says God "can do all things." Jeremiah said, "Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You" (Jeremiah 32:17). Being all-powerful doesn't mean that God can or will perform logical impossibilities, such as making a square circle or a stone so large it can't be moved.

Ephesians 4:6 says there is "one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." God is certainly unique. The first of the Ten Commandments says, "You shall have no

other gods before Me.” That is, no other gods besides Me. Man-made gods are forbidden, because they are imaginary and don’t exist. Idols can’t reflect the true grandeur and glory of the eternal God who doesn’t live in temples made with hands according to Acts 17:24. Men sin against God when they forsake the immortal God and they serve creatures as the pagans did with idolatry in ancient times. Paul said, “Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one” (1 Corinthians 8:4).

Since God is Lord of all, He is sovereign. God rules the nations. According to Jeremiah 18:7-10, God plants and uproots nations. According to Acts 17:26, He “made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.” God now commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). At the end of the world, God will judge each of us according to our works and according to His Word.

As the judge of men, thankfully God is impartial. God doesn’t show favoritism, but He accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right (Acts 10:34-35). Because God is holy, we can regard what He teaches as righteous. Psalm 19:9 says, “The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.” God’s moral and religious standards will stand firm at the judgment. Though people want to set God’s ways aside, God has spoken in His Word what His teaching is about, and those things regarding spiritual matters and about morals. God hasn’t given us any weak or useless laws. Each one has a purpose.

As we consider God’s character, we must realize that God is utterly holy. Isaiah tells of the seraphim who cry out, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts” (Isaiah 6:3). James 1:13 says, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.” God commands His children, “Be ye holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). Because God is holy, sin is offensive. People today are keenly aware of what offends them, but they may not know what offends God. While God loves the sinner and has provided a way of salvation, God still gets offended when the people He loves sin against Him.

God’s grace doesn’t cancel out His holiness. God never approves of sin. The prophet Habakkuk says about God, “Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor” (Habakkuk 1:13). According to Hebrews 6:18, the Bible says “it is impossible for God to lie,” or to commit any sin. It’s God’s holiness that demands justice when people sin. God’s goodness means that He cannot ignore sin. God doesn’t simply make up sins arbitrarily. Sin is sin, because God knows it’s destructive and harmful. God speaks out against sin, because He loves people. Being holy is good for people; and sin is always harmful.

In addition, God is unchangeable. God Himself said, “I am the Lord, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6). Moses wrote, “God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” (Numbers 23:19). God doesn’t have the weaknesses of fickle men who change at a whim. James 1:17 says, “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” I am thankful that God doesn’t change, because that means that we can count on Him to keep His

promises. We can also count on His commandments and His moral teaching. Culture doesn't change God. Right and wrong do not change with the times.

I am thankful that God is merciful. The Lord Jesus said that your Father in heaven "causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). Even though men were foolish and disobedient, God's kindness and love appeared in Christ Jesus. Titus 3:5 says, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy." God's mercy can save even the worst of sinners when they repent and turn to Him.

That's because God is love. We know what love is and what good is, because of the great example of our God in Christ Jesus. First John 4:7-11 says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Now in this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." God's character teaches us how to live and how to love. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

Why does this matter? The more we know about God, the more we love Him and the more we want to be like Him. Christ embodied every good and righteous thing, and everything He did blesses us and gives us life. The Lord Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). We need to know the Lord Jesus; and the more we know Him, the better our understanding of our Father in Heaven will be.

God is God. He created us, gives us life, and will judge us at the last day. Whether we accept or approve of Him, He's still the one true and living God. God's power, His teaching, and character hasn't changed, even if our culture changes. What we think or feel about God doesn't define Him. God defines and describes Himself through His revealed Word. We must accept Him on His terms. The God of the Bible is very different from many popular beliefs. Some serve a false god that they wish existed rather than the true God revealed in Scripture. This is why we must search the Scriptures. We want the true God.

I have a question. Paul called the God of the Bible "my God" in Philippians 4:19. Is He your God? Be honest: are you living in such a way that honors or dishonors God, that pleases or offends Him? If you are living in such a way that God is offended, then shouldn't you think about your soul?

To get right with God, love and believe in Jesus Christ. Believe that He died for your sins and arose from the dead. Make Him your Lord by turning from your sins in repentance. Becoming a Christian and transforming your life, leaving that old man of sin to become like Jesus Christ. With your love, and faith, and repentance, confess your faith and be baptized into Christ. Now baptism is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism is the time when God buries the old man of sin and raises you up to walk in newness of life according to Romans 6:3-7. In baptism God acts upon you, making you His child, adding you to the church, forgiving your sins, and giving you eternal life. What are you waiting for? The Bible says in Acts 22:16, "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." Won't you do that today?

Gods of This World

Idolatry is the worship or adoration of anyone or anything other than the Lord God. Do people have idols they worship today? We believe in the one true and living God, the One you can know through studying the Scriptures. The God of the Bible is certainly different from the gods of this world, different from the gods of false religions, and different from the idols of ancient times. He is the all-wise, all-powerful, holy, and righteous Creator of all that exists. The Scriptures make it clear that He is unique. This great God of ours has left us His wisdom, His guidance, and His message of love and salvation in the Bible. Wouldn't it be tragic if we never took time to study what our great God says to us? This is why we believe it necessary to return each week to study God's Word. We hope you'll join us each week.

The Lord God said, "You shall not make for yourselves idols, nor shall you set up for yourselves an image or a sacred pillar, nor shall you place a figured stone in your land to bow down to it; for I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 26:1). Idolatry is the worship or adoration of anyone or anything other than the Lord God. Idolatry includes the worship of other gods, such as those of the nations surrounding Israel, images or idols, and the creation itself.

People in ancient times manufactured gods and worshiped the work of their own hands. Sometimes their sculptures represented dead men that they admired, sometimes various animals, sometimes the blending of an animal with a man, and sometimes a demon. Their worship, however, was useless. That man-made idol couldn't do anything for them; but the God of heaven can be a great blessing to us.

Our reading today comes from the prophet Isaiah 44:6-8. "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me. 'Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, From the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming, And the events that are going to take place. 'Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.'" In Deuteronomy 4:28, Moses described idols as "the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell." God's prophet Habakkuk asked, "What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, Or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols. Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, 'Awake!' To a mute stone, 'Arise!' And that's your teacher? Behold, it's overlaid with gold and silver, And there is no breath inside it at all. But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him" (Habakkuk 2:18-20).

The Israelites borrowed the idolatry of the nations surrounding them and from their foreign neighbors who lived in the land. When the family of Jacob was in Egypt before the days of Moses, they saw all of the false gods and idols of the Egyptians. In Exodus 32, while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, the people demanded that Aaron make gods for them. Aaron took "the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf." Egyptians worshiped a whole family of cows and bovine and bulls.

When Solomon became king he married numerous foreign wives who came "from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, 'You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart away

after their gods.’ Solomon clung to these wives in love the Bible says. He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart” (1 Kings 11:2-3). Solomon turned his heart away from the living God, and he went after the gods of his wives and served them. Because Solomon sinned, God tore the kingdom apart and gave the northern ten tribes to his servant Jeroboam. When Jeroboam became king of Israel, he set up golden calves at Bethel and at Dan. The Scriptures call him, “Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin” (1 Kings 22:52).

In later years, northern Israel tried to blend their faith in the true God with the false gods that were surrounding them. God told them that if they feared and served Him, He would protect them from their enemies. But 2 Kings 17:40-41 says, “However, they would not listen, but they did according to their former manner. So these nations feared the Lord and also served their carved images.” God will not tolerate or bless those who are double-minded. We must do more than give God first place; He is the only true and living God. He demands all our worship and service.

Psalms 86:8-10 says, “There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord, Nor are there any works like Yours. All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name. For You are great and do wondrous deeds; You alone are God.” First Corinthians 8:4 says, “we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.” Paul is saying that idols are just material things made up by men; there isn’t any god behind the idol.

Sadly, through the years people haven’t honored God, though He alone is worthy of it. They have followed their own ways or they have blindly followed false gods. Jeremiah 2:12-13 says, “‘Be appalled, O heavens, at this, And shudder, be very desolate,’ declares the Lord. ‘For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.’” The Jews in Jeremiah’s day abandoned their faith in the true God to serve useless, false gods.

Why would anyone serve a humanly crafted idol and call it a god? Isaiah 40:19-20 says, “As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, A goldsmith plates it with gold, And a silversmith fashions chains of silver. He who is too impoverished for such an offering selects a tree that doesn’t rot; He seeks out for himself a skilled craftsman to prepare an idol that will not totter.” A few chapters later, Isaiah mocks the people for worshiping an idol or thinking that an idol could help them in times of trouble. Isaiah 44:14-17 says, “He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and he lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. And then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes part of that tree and he warms himself; and he kindles a fire and he bakes bread. Also, (from that same tree) he makes a god and he worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it. Half of it he burns in the fire. And over the half he eats the meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. And he also warms himself and he says, ‘Oh, aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!’ And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and he falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, ‘Deliver me, for you are my god!’”

Again we ask why forsake the God of heaven to worship an idol? They worshiped the idol, and here’s the reason why, because they could control the idol. An idol wasn’t holy and an idol didn’t give moral commandments. If they served the God of heaven, they would have to obey Him; but if they had an idol, that they themselves made, they could live however they pleased.

All they had to do was to keep the idol happy! Of course, their idol had no eyes, no ears, no tongue, and no mind. It was just a thing. But if you worshiped the gods of the idols, you could participate in a lifestyle filled with sexual immorality and evil. Many of the idols were of naked men or women and emphasized their sexual nature. Pagan worship often included drunkenness, revelry, and fornication. Ancient pagan temples were often filled with priests and priestesses who filled the role of prostitutes.

Keeping the false gods happy led to many abusive and cruel practices. Psalm 106:35-38 says Israel “mingled with the nations, And learned their practices, And they served their idols, Which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, And shed innocent blood, The blood of their sons and their daughters, Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; And the land was polluted with blood.” God knew that if His people gave in to the false gods they would become sexually immoral and kill their own children. True faith in God protects the innocent and calls people to live holy and chaste lives. False religion is a shame and a tragedy for everyone it touches.

The pagan gods of Greece and Rome were known to be selfish, petty, vindictive, and filled with every kind of vice. Their followers believed that their duty was to keep these petty gods from getting angry with them, and so they worshiped and made sacrifices to them. If some great catastrophe happened, the pagan priests would blame it on the people’s failure. The pagan priests and priestesses used the people’s superstitions to control them.

No pagan god was ever like the God of the Bible. Our heavenly Father sent His Son Jesus to be a sacrifice for us; He never asked us to sacrifice our innocent children by making them pass through the fire like some of the kings of Judah did in ancient times. Pagan gods usually had a region or a city over which they were a god, but the God of the Bible is God over all the earth and all the universe. The pagan gods were thought to be present in their image, or idol, and living in the temple as a king in his palace. But Paul noted that men were foolish to think that they could exchange “the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles” (Romans 1:22-23). The Lord Jesus said in John 4:24, “God is spirit,” that is, God is not material, but spiritual.

The idolatry of ancient times kept people from knowing the true God who created us and provides for us the sun, and the rain, and every blessing. Physical forms can never fully represent God. When Solomon dedicated the temple, he prayed, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27).

When Paul spoke to the pagan philosophers of Athens he said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:22-23). They were ignorant of the true God, because they had focused on making their own gods. They wanted to create a god rather than to recognize God as their Creator.

Idolatry isn’t simply a problem of the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, or Romans. Idolatry wasn’t simply a temptation to Israel. Many today have their own idols. Idolatry includes anything receiving worship other than the one true and living God. Idols don’t have to be objects like the idols of old, but that doesn’t mean that they aren’t man-made gods. For instance, Colossians 3:5 figuratively speaks of greed or covetousness as idolatry. We defined

idolatry earlier as “the worship or adoration of anyone or anything other than the Lord God.” Some truly worship and serve their riches or their power, and this preoccupation leaves no room for God in their lives.

Why would anyone today worship some false god? Here’s why. If you worship God as God, then God has a place in your life and can rule your life. But if you worship an idol of your own choosing, then you have power to do as you please. Many people choose sin and the devil as their idol. Second Corinthians 4:4 speaks of the “god of this world”; and 1 John 5:19 says, “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” Who’s that? It’s the devil. He would like everyone to think he is God, and the devil wants to be a god to you. In 2 Corinthians 11:14, the Bible says, “And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

You might remember what Satan did with the Lord Jesus, when Satan tempted Him. Matthew 4:8-10 says, “the devil took him up to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And the devil said to him, ‘all these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him (that is the devil), ‘Be gone, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” The devil will promise the world to you too, if you will just bow down and serve him. But remember that the devil is an evil liar and is your greatest enemy. If you follow him, you will surely lose your soul.

Who you serve matters. The Lord Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and he forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24-26).

In his last appearance before Israel, Joshua said, “Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:14-15).

What about you; will you serve yourself or will you serve the Lord? We all have choices; what will we do, what will we choose? First John 2:15-17 says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

Choose to serve the Lord. Become a faithful, active Christian. You can do that by placing your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, by turning away from sin to live a holy life in repentance, by confessing your faith in Jesus Christ, and by being baptized into Christ. Romans 6:3 says, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” We are baptized into Christ. That is when we are united with Him in His death, His burial, and His resurrection. We are baptized into His death, and at that time His blood cleanses us from sin. Today is the best day for you to become a Christian! Won’t you choose Christ?

One of a Kind

The Lord Jesus is truly unique. No one in all history compares with His love, His purity, or His honesty. Today we're going to see how Jesus is one of a kind. We know the Scriptures come from God, and there is no other volume in all the earth like the Bible. Second Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Because it's God's Word, the Bible can work in our lives like no other book. It can teach us the truth, keep us straight, and train us to do what is right. God blessed us greatly through the Bible.

In all of history, Jesus stands unique; He is one of a kind. We can find no one so pure, so kind, so humble, so loving, or so honest. He sets the standard for morality, for sacrificial giving, for compassion, and for righteousness. He is our only hope, our only joy, our only peace, and our only source of eternal life. The apostle Paul said of Jesus, that He "became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord'" (1 Corinthians 1:30-31). What is Jesus to you? How do you regard Him? Have you set Him apart as Lord in your life? Is He one of a kind in your life? When you boast, do you boast in the Lord?

Our scripture reading today is from Acts 4:8-12. Peter and John had healed a lame man who was in the temple. They were called to account by the chief priests and others. Here are the words of Peter. "And then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He is the **STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED** by you, **THE BUILDERS**, but **WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER** stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.'" Let's pray together. Father, we're grateful for the fact that Jesus came to this earth. And we know that we must give our faith and our trust to Him. Father help us everyday to be pleasing in your sight, and to love our Lord. It's in His name we pray, Amen!

Dr. James Francis wrote this brief essay about Jesus Christ in 1926, "Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a little carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years, He was an itinerant preacher. He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself...While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property that He had on earth – His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen long centuries have come and gone, and today He is the centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress. And I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built,

and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as that one solitary life.”

Jesus was and is indeed one of a kind! We can thank God that He came to this earth and gave Himself that we might have forgiveness, that we might have eternal life, and hope. Because of Jesus, we have reconciliation with the Father. Because we pray in His name, the Father hears and answers. Because of Jesus, we can become children of God and fellow heirs with Christ in heaven. How is Jesus able to do all this?

First, Jesus is unique because He has always existed. John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And all things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” Some see Jesus as nothing more than a myth; others see Him only as a traveling preacher. The Bible, however, teaches that Jesus was in the beginning and created you and me. In Revelation 22:13 Jesus said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” The Lord Jesus told the Jews, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). In saying this, Jesus was revealing His divine nature, that He’s always existed.

Second, Jesus is unique in that He fulfilled prophecies made hundreds of years before His birth. You cannot find prophecies of other religious leaders like those that are made about Christ. The apostles appealed repeatedly to God’s prophecies found in the Old Testament to show Jesus is the promised prophet and the Messiah. J. Barton Payne listed 191 Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. Alfred Edersheim, a Jewish Christian scholar, cited 456 Old Testament passages referring to the Messiah. The Jews knew that a Messiah would come, and Jesus fulfilled those well-known prophecies precisely as no one else could.

The prophets knew that Jesus would be a son of David, that He would be born in Bethlehem of Judea, that He would be betrayed by a friend for thirty pieces of silver, that He would be crucified, that His bones would not be broken, that soldiers would gamble over His clothes, and that darkness would cover the land. The prophets knew that He would ride triumphantly into Jerusalem on a donkey, that He would teach in parables, and that He would rise from the dead on the third day. Isaiah, the prophet, knew that He would make His grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death.

The Lord Jesus could say, “these are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44). Jesus said the prophets wrote about Him in John 5:39. Peter could claim, “the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled” (Acts 3:18). Yes, Jesus fulfilled the many prophecies given about Him over hundreds of years. Can anyone else make such a claim? No, Jesus is indeed one of a kind.

Third, Jesus is unique in that He was born of a virgin. Isaiah made the prophecy about Him in Isaiah 7:14. The apostle Matthew records its fulfillment in Matthew 1:20-25. Matthew tells how an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us).

Now when Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: and he took his wife, but he knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.” The virgin birth is unique; and only God could make that happen.

Fourth, Jesus is unique in that He never committed a single sin. Peter said, “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). Jesus could ask, “Which one of you convicts me of sin?” (John 8:46). Could you say that? Jesus could not have sacrificed Himself for our sins if He Himself had committed sins. First John 3:5 says, “You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.”

Because He was sinless, He was the perfect high priest and the perfect sacrifice. Hebrews 4:15-16 says, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 7:26-27 explains, “For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all time when he offered up himself.”

Fifth, Jesus is unique, because He bodily arose from the dead. The Lord Jesus confidently predicted “that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised” (Matthew 16:21). The eyewitnesses to His death and resurrection say it happened precisely that way. Through the years, others have predicted that they would rise from the dead, but no one has; no one else has risen, only Jesus Christ. One can visit the tombs of the world’s great religious leaders, and those tombs possess the bones of those leaders. Jesus’ tomb, however, is empty.

Jesus did not get resurrected in an emergency room after an accident. He wasn’t given a shock after His heart stopped. No, they took His dead body to the tomb. Pilate would not release His body until he was sure that Jesus was dead. That’s why the soldier pierced His side with the spear. John 19:34 says that when he was pierced with that spear, “immediately blood and water came out,” giving proof that He had died. There can be no doubt, He truly was dead. They bound His body “in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews” (John 19:40). He spent three days in the tomb, but He arose just as He promised.

Both His disciples and His enemies knew the place where He was buried. His enemies tried to prevent His disciples from stealing the body and claiming a resurrection. Matthew 27:62-66 says, “the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, and they said, ‘Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’ Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.’ Pilate said to them, ‘You have a guard; you go, make it as secure as you know how.’ And they went and they made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.”

But the guards and the seals, the governor’s seal, couldn’t prevent Jesus from rising from the dead. God planned and ordained His resurrection. David prophesied a thousand years before the time of Christ, “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption” (Psalm 16:10). The apostle Peter cited this passage and declared, “God raised Him up again,

putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power” (Acts 2:24). Again, Peter said of David, “he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all, (that is all the apostles), witnesses” (Acts 2:31-32).

Yes, Jesus had witnesses. He appeared on twelve occasions to His disciples. Paul said, “He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:6). His disciples were skeptical at first, and some had hardened their hearts in unbelief. But Acts 1:3 says Jesus “presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days.” They saw Him, heard Him, touched Him, and ate with Him. In being resurrected like this, Jesus is one of a kind. These disciples who could hardly believe at first, were bold and courageous after the forty days. They told the story of His resurrection again and again in spite of all the opposition and persecution. They wouldn’t sit silent and leave the truth untold.

Some skeptics claim Jesus wasn’t the only god that died and was resurrected. They say Jesus actually borrowed this idea from some pagan gods. The problem with this claim, as the historian and Biblical scholar Mike Licona has pointed out in his book “The Case for the Real Jesus”, is that the reports of pagan gods dying and rising from the dead can only be found after the first century. While there are reports of dying and rising gods among the pagan religions, there are no reports of someone dying for the sins of mankind and rising up bodily like Jesus did. What we do find is pagan religions talking about the changing seasons of winter to spring being like a resurrection. No, the gospel story is indeed unique; and there simply is no one like Jesus Christ.

Why does this matter? Because the Lord Jesus Christ is the one and only Son of God, who can save our souls. Is He your Savior and your Lord? Let’s pray together. Father help us to give our hearts and lives and souls to Jesus. To serve Him all the days that we live. And help us to love You. In Jesus name, Amen!

Everything in history before Jesus points forward to Him, and our calendars point back to Him. He is Lord of all people, of all places, of all tongues, and of all time. He is indeed one of a kind. We must place our faith and trust in Jesus. The apostle Paul wrote, “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

The word “gospel” means good news, and everything Jesus did is good news for you and me. He died for our sins; He arose so that we might have life. Like the Christians of old, we need to receive the gospel, believe it, and hold fast to it. The gospel has the power to save you, and if you receive and obey it, it can. Put your faith in Jesus, and in His Word. Repent of your sins and begin following the Christ. Confess your faith in the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. And be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. When you’re baptized into Christ, according to Romans 6:3-7, you’ll be united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Then you’ll be raised with Him to walk in newness of life, free from sin, and with the hope of eternal life. No one can give you that life but Jesus. Follow Him; serve Him! And do it today!

A True Testimony

Can we trust what the four gospel accounts say about Jesus? Today we're going to see why we should trust Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We search the Scriptures for the truth about Jesus and about how we should live so that we may please Him. Jesus is Lord, and His word is the authority in every moral and spiritual matter. Jesus didn't leave His message to chance memory or to hearsay. He intended for it to be written down and read for all time. He wanted us to be sure of our salvation by giving us a message that is utterly true and trustworthy.

The Lord Jesus received His message from the Father and He delivered it faithfully to His disciples. Jesus explains that, "he who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one that judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; and therefore the things that I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me" (John 12:48-50). Because our salvation matters to Jesus, Jesus gave us the Father's words accurately, precisely.

Nothing is more important than to know the Lord Jesus Christ and to know His love and His salvation. All we know about Jesus comes from what we find in the New Testament. For this reason, we must study the Word of God to find the truth about Jesus. The New Testament reveals His love, His character, His miracles, and His teaching. We hold that the New Testament is indeed historically reliable, that we can trust it, and that we can trust what it says to be accurate.

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According To Luke 1:1-4, "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught." The Lord God gave us the Bible to teach us how to be saved and how to please Him. The Holy Spirit moved men who were apostles and those closely associated with the apostles to write about the teaching and the events of Jesus' life. Because of this, those who wrote were in the right position to know the truth about Jesus Christ.

John said about his gospel account, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31). John knew the promise of Jesus found in John 14:26. The Lord said, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." Again, He said, "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me" (John 15:26).

The fact that their message was confirmed by miraculous events is not something to set aside. In Acts chapter 3, Peter and John healed a man in the name of Jesus at the Gate called Beautiful in the Temple, a man who had been lame for forty years, a man that everyone knew. When the authorities, who tried to put a stop to faith in Christ, heard about it, they said, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign (or miracle) has been performed through them is

evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it” (Acts 4:16). The enemies knew the miraculous power of Christ and the apostles.

For this reason, Hebrews 2:1-4 says, “Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For, since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.” God confirmed, He put His seal on the message with these undeniable miracles. Should we not listen carefully to what is written in the New Testament?

The third gospel account was written by Luke. Luke wanted to know the truth and he wanted to share it accurately with others. In the prologue, that we read a moment ago, we read, “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us (speaking of course about Jesus) just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things that you have been taught” (Luke 1:1-4). Luke wanted to give Theophilus certainty about the things he was reading. We too can find that certainty by reading the New Testament.

Sir William Ramsay, a New Testament scholar and archaeologist, made a thorough research of the details of the book of Acts. He said, “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians...Luke’s history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness.” F. F. Bruce, a renowned Biblical scholar agreed. He said, “Where Luke has been suspected of inaccuracy, and accuracy has been vindicated by some inscriptional evidence, it may be legitimate to say that archaeology has confirmed the New Testament record.”

When Paul testified about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ before King Agrippa, he said, “For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). What Jesus did was known to all who lived at that time. Peter could point to the miracles of Jesus before the Jews on Pentecost and say, “as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22). Even the high priest, Caiaphas, could say of the miracles of Jesus, that “this man performs many signs. And if we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him” (John 11:47-48). In Acts 2:32 Peter could say of the resurrection of Jesus that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses. In verse 37, Peter could say, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus (and then he pointed his finger and said) whom you crucified.” They knew about it. All the Jews knew of the crucifixion; they knew about the earthquake; they knew about the veil that was torn in the temple and the period of darkness.

Jesus didn’t have only one apostle; He had twelve. Jesus didn’t have merely one contemporary author of His life and teaching, but four. Should one of them have misled the public, the others would have immediately censured him and corrected the testimony. Jesus came to bear witness to the truth, and His disciples were committed to telling the truth about

Him and His teaching. They despised the practice of making false claims, lying, or being greedy. They loved God and loved the souls of men. As F. F. Bruce stated, “The earliest proclaimers welcomed the fullest examination of the credentials of their message.” They knew their message was true!

The apostle Peter said, “For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). Likewise, John speaks of being an eyewitness. He said about Jesus, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and we testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1-3).

At the crucifixion, John saw the soldier pierce the side of Jesus with a spear to make sure that He was dead. John said in John 19:34-37, “at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: that ‘Not one of his bones will be broken’” (from Psalm 34:20). Another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced” (Psalm 22:16-17).

So...how do we know that what they wrote in the New Testament is true? Could we prove this in a court of law? Many years ago, Simon Greenleaf, who served as a professor of law, a distinguished professor at Harvard University, wrote a book defending the testimony given by the authors of the New Testament. He said, “Let the testimony (that is, of the Gospels) be sifted, as it were given in a court of justice on the side of the adverse party, the witness being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. Well, the result is that it will be confidently believed, and that it will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth.”

When the disciples preached and wrote about the resurrection of Jesus, they knew that they would face persecution. Jesus warned them, “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. And if you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” And then He said, “remember the word that I said to you: that ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me they will also persecute you. And if they kept my word, they will also keep yours” (John 15:18-20).

Regardless of what the officials ruled or did to the disciples, they continued to proclaim the gospel of Christ. They lived in poverty, endured beatings and imprisonment, and often paid the ultimate price of an early death by violence. Why would they do this? They certainly would not have sacrificed so much for a myth that they fabricated! They wouldn’t even allow the smallest change to their testimony. They were preaching and writing for the Lord. It never entered their minds to evangelize the nations for any other reason. As Rob Van De Weghe said, “Lying, exaggerating, spinning the truth, becoming famous, or gaining any wealth, was not in their agenda.” One can clearly see the boldness of the apostles in the words of Peter and John to the Sanhedrin, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20).

Christianity started and spread in a very hostile environment. Both the Jews and the pagan nations despised the Christians. The enemies of Christianity could have stopped the mouths of the evangelists if they could have proven the resurrection didn't really happen. All they had to do was produce the body of Jesus Christ. The enemies of Jesus and His disciples could not dispute the claims of His resurrection or keep His disciples from telling the story again and again. Tertullian said, "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church." They were willing to sacrifice themselves for their faith, knowing their sacrifice would lead to the conversion of others. The Lord Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). They truly believed what they preached and were willing to die for their faith.

Someone says, "Well Phil, I know the apostles and early prophets were inspired; but how can I be sure that what is written is from the Lord Jesus?" Well that's a good question. Jesus made provision for His words to be available for all time. He promised to "send prophets and wise men and scribes." Scribes? (Matthew 23:34). Yes, scribes! The scribes were inspired men who wrote down what the Lord taught. The apostle Peter spoke of those writing prophets who gave us God's will. Second Peter 1:20-21 says, "knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along (that is moved) by the Holy Spirit." When he said this, he wasn't merely speaking of the Old Testament, because Peter spoke of Paul's writings as Scriptures in 2 Peter 3:16.

Why are we studying this? We've taken time because we want to be sure of our faith, that it's true. If Jesus spoke with great care and precision when He delivered the Father's words to us, shouldn't we take great care to find the truth? Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding." You can believe Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We couldn't know anything for certain about God unless He had revealed Himself to us. We couldn't know how to be saved or how to have eternal life unless God revealed that, too. Thankfully, God revealed His will by giving us His inspired scriptures. God didn't want us to guess about our salvation or to invent our own religion. He wanted us to know the truth. John said, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

We can know the truth! The Lord Jesus promised, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32). We want to be free from sin, free from falsehoods, and free from man-made religion. We want and need to hear and obey the Lord in every matter. Thankfully, we can find the truth in the Scriptures!

If you want to be right with the Lord, obey the Lord's teachings. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart. Believe that He is the Son of God and believe the gospel. If you want to be right with God, repent of your sins. Forsake everything that is evil, and cling to what is good and right. Confess Jesus Christ as the Lord and the Son of God. If you wish to be saved, you must be baptized into Christ. Baptism is an immersion in water in His name. When you're baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins; He'll give you newness of life (Romans 6:4). Don't wait. Obey the Lord today. Get right with God. We hope that as you've thought about these things, that this study will stir you to act. Think about what God says.

The All Sufficient Word

God's inspired Word teaches us all we need to know to live as Christians and to have eternal life in heaven. We can find all the spiritual truth that we need in Scripture. The Bible makes it clear that God, from the beginning, desired that His authoritative revelations be written down and preserved for later generations. Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord in Exodus 24:4, and his book was preserved in the Ark (Deuteronomy 31:26). God commanded that His laws be read to all the people every seven years so that they and their children who did not know the law could learn to fear the Lord.

We know Joshua "made a covenant with the people... And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God" (Joshua 24:25-26). We know "Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the LORD" (1 Samuel 10:25). God told Isaiah to "go, write it on a tablet before them, and inscribe it on a scroll, that it may serve in the time to come as a witness forever" (Isaiah 30:8). We know Ezra "set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

The New Testament writers used the phrase "It is written" over 90 times. They stressed the authority of the written word of God. In Matthew 22:29, Jesus rebuked the Sadducees because they did not know "the Scriptures nor the power of God." God undoubtedly intended from the beginning that His words and deeds would be preserved in Scripture. What God writes is not just written, but stands written for all people, in all places, for all time.

Our reading comes from the words of Jesus, found in the Gospel According To John 16:12 - 15. "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; and therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you."

From the beginning, God has never allowed men to change or tamper with His revealed will. God said through Moses, "You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). Again, God said, "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it" (Deuteronomy 12:32). God's Word does not need editing and cannot be improved. Proverbs 30:5-6 says, "Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar."

Paul told the Corinthians that they "were not to go beyond what is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6). Later Paul said it's disgraceful and underhanded "to practice cunning or to tamper with God's holy word" (2 Corinthians 4:2). When some Jewish leaders tried to pervert the gospel, Paul said that they were accursed (Galatians 1:8-9). When some false teachers tried to change the doctrine that Christ came in the flesh, John said, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). Anytime people tamper or edit the teaching of God, they will find that they lose the blessing of God.

At the end of the book of Revelation, John warned against anyone tampering with that particular book. Revelation 22:18-19 says, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to them the plagues described in

this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.” Of course, what is true of the book of Revelation, is true of any book of the New Testament. We must not add to or take away anything from what God has caused to be written.

Why would God forbid adding or taking away from His scriptures? It’s because God’s message is complete and final. It says everything that God intended to say; to change the Scripture in any way challenges God’s wisdom and His authority. Changing God’s words to suit our culture, or rewriting God’s laws to please ourselves, is an act of utter rebellion and dishonors God. Changing God’s teaching or His moral laws, says men are smarter and wiser than God, that they know better than He knows. That’s presumptuous!

David said, “The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; And sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; and in keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors?’ And then he said, ‘Acquit me of hidden faults. Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression’” (Psalm 19:7-13.) David knew the perfection of God’s Word and he didn’t want to presume that he could improve upon it. Presumptuous sin is a great transgression in God’s eyes.

Jesus promised His apostles that they would receive the Holy Spirit, who would give them all the spiritual truths that God wanted us to know. The Lord Jesus said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). They not only had the privilege of hearing the voice of Jesus, they would also have the Spirit to remind them of the Lord’s teaching.

Again, Jesus said, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (John 16:12-13) The Lord Jesus knew the apostles would face many problems and they would need guidance into all the truth. Jesus was not going to withhold any truth; the Spirit was to guide them in their lifetime into all the truth. If they received all the truth, then we cannot expect that more truth would come in other centuries. They received every truth that was needed by the church to live as God would have them live and to have eternal life.

The apostle Peter said, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3). Peter wasn’t like some today who feel as if they were cheated out of some spiritual truth that they can only find outside the Scriptures – in some human tradition or in some idea or that they think came directly from the Holy Spirit. He wasn’t like some who think our culture’s values trump whatever God said long ago. He saw that everything that we need can be found in the Bible.

Paul also understood the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures. He wrote the young preacher, Timothy, “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the

sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.' Then he said, 'All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work'" (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Paul didn't point Timothy to later-day prophets, to church councils, or to cultural trends that would correct the teaching of the Lord. He told Timothy to look back to Scripture. We must do the same. The Scriptures can make us wise to salvation; and they are God-breathed and profitable. We aren't lacking anything when we possess the Scriptures. Acts 17:11 says, "Now these (that is the Berean's) were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so." They wanted to know, so they went to the Bible!

First, Paul said the Scriptures are profitable for teaching. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path." Christianity has always been a faith built on teaching or doctrine. The Lord Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, then you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32). Only the truth can make us free. Acts 2:42 says that the early church "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." That teaching is preserved for us in the New Testament.

Saying goodbye to the elders of the church at Ephesus, Paul said, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). They needed Scripture to make them strong and to save them. Paul urged Timothy, "and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, you entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). Paul was interested in perpetuating what had already been taught, not in looking to some later day church canon or supposed prophecy.

Second, the Scriptures are profitable for reproof. That is, scripture teaches us convincingly what is right and wrong and rebukes us for our sins. The psalmist cried out, "'How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart,' the psalmist says, 'I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I've stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you'" (Psalm 119:9-11). Many think that we should never make anyone feel guilty. Without a doubt, some have abused guilt. God gave us a conscience for a reason. When we see the price that Christ paid for our sins and we learn that we've done wrong, our guilt and our godly sorrow leads us to repent. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of ways. If we never received a rebuke for sin, we would never see a need for change. Reproof gives a need for the third thing that's mentioned in Scripture, and that's correction. We have teaching, then we have reproof, and then we have correction.

The Scriptures motivate us to repent and correct the wrongs we have done, and to leave the false teachings we have believed and come to the truth. In Acts 18, we're introduced to a Jew named Apollos, who was an eloquent preacher, but he was only acquainted with the baptism of John and did not know about baptism into Christ. Acts 18:26 says, "he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." Apollos didn't get angry at Priscilla and Aquila for their correction. When we're corrected, we shouldn't get angry either, but should humbly change and thank God for the truth. The truth corrects us.

Fourth, Scripture is profitable for training in righteousness. The instructions of the New Testament and the examples found in Scripture train us how to love and to care for others, to serve and worship God, to evangelize, to restore the fallen, and to be the church that Jesus loves. It teaches us how to live godly and to go to heaven. It teaches how to be like Jesus in every way.

When the Spirit revealed the gospel truth to the apostles, He revealed it for all time. We must preach the gospel that they preached in the first century if we wish to remain right with God. First Peter 1:22-25 says, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that was preached to you.” Psalm 119:160 says, “The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.”

The gospel that purified souls in the first century is the same gospel that purifies souls today. There’s only one imperishable seed planted in the hearts of people causing them to be born again into Christ. That seed existed in the first century and it will last until the end of time. If we corrupt or change that seed, it won’t produce a truly born again person. It’ll produce something else outside of the truth. Our souls are purified by obedience to the Lord’s gospel truth, not by obedience to a gospel that’s reconfigured to suit some human tradition or to fit our culture today. We need the Word of God!

Since Scripture is all sufficient, then it’s the final authority on all doctrinal and moral matters. Let’s not correct what God has said, but trust and obey Him. We must not only abide within the teaching, but also defend what God teaches. Jude 3 urges us to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” The contents of our faith was once for all time delivered complete and whole. Jude warned the church of false teachers who would exploit them and lead them into immorality. They would change the Word of God and develop their own religion. What happened then is still happening.

To be true to Christ, remain in the teaching of Scripture. Don’t allow human traditions, false prophecies, or man-made religion to move you away from the truth. The Bible contains everything we need to know to be saved, to serve the Lord, and to have eternal life. When people add to or subtract from what God teaches in the New Testament, they’ve left the faith and they left the truth. Just as false prophets in Jeremiah 23:16 spoke out of their own imagination, so many are inventing their own religions today. Stay with the Bible. If the Bible teaches it, believe and obey it. If it goes beyond the Bible, beware.

This is why we teach what the apostles taught about salvation. We tell people what Peter told them in Acts 2:38, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” We tell them what Ananias told Paul in Acts 22:16, “And now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.” Today, if you believe in the Lord Jesus as the Christ, repent of your sins and be baptized, immersed in water, so that your sins may be washed away.