

# *Program Transcripts*

For June 2019



IN  
**SEARCH**  
OF THE LORD'S WAY<sup>®</sup>

# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

**June 2019**

*Topics subject to change without notice*

## **JUNE 2 – WE NEED JESUS**

Whether we know it or not, we all need Jesus! He is the source of every spiritual blessing; and without Him we can do nothing. Jesus provides us with faith, hope, and love. He gives us strength to live the abundant life.

## **JUNE 9 – THE WORD WAS GOD**

John 1:1 says, “In the beginning as the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Jesus as the Word came into this world to bring light and life. We need to receive Him to become children of God.

## **JUNE 16 – JESUS AND HIS PROMISES**

A promise is only as good as the one who made it and his ability to stand behind it. God never lies and can do all things. When God makes a promise, you can depend upon Him to keep it. God keeps His promises.

## **JUNE 23 – JESUS IS LORD**

Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He could say, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). Since He has authority over all flesh, we are accountable to Him.

## **JUNE 30 – JESUS WILL RETURN**

Jesus has promised He will return one day for His people. On that day He will resurrect everyone in the graves, judge them, and assign them to their eternal destiny. We can be confident Jesus is coming again.

## We Need Jesus

We face many battles in life, but one of the most serious comes in choosing between what we want and what we need. Today, we're focusing on what we most need. The Scriptures open to us the knowledge and wisdom of God which we need to enjoy an abundant and eternal life. If we shun the Word of God, we cheat ourselves. God knows what we need; and in His Word, He gives us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). God's Word is more valuable than gold and sweeter than honey. We're never truly educated until we know the Scriptures.

I've known folks who've been satisfied with their religious life. If you invite them to study the Bible or to worship with you at church, they see little need because they're happy as they are. They may be happy, but they aren't asking whether God is happy with them. People can easily deceive themselves into spiritual complacency and forget about God. They may think they have all that they need without God, but they're only fooling themselves.

Jesus told the story of a young man who got his inheritance early. He thought this would make him happy; and for a while it allowed him to do everything he wanted to do. He found out, however, that worldly happiness never lasts. Luke 15:14 says, "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished." He had placed his happiness and hopes on money in a far country. When the money ran out, he had nothing. Fortunately, he came to his senses and he saw for the first time in a long time what he really needed. So, he came home to his Father and home to God. Do you need to come home?

Our reading today comes from the Book of Revelation 3:15-20. The Lord Jesus Himself is speaking to the church at Laodicea that had become very complacent.

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

If you ask people what they need, they may list several physical needs: air, food, water, clothes, and shelter. They need medical care, financial resources, education, training in many skills, family, and social relationships. Each person is more than flesh and blood; also having a soul and spirit. Just as people have physical needs, they also have spiritual needs. People are disadvantaged if even one of the needs is not met.

As a child and as a young man, "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). As God's people, we have mental, physical, social, and spiritual needs. Most of us are well aware of our mental, physical, and social needs; but we may not realize how vital and significant our spiritual needs are. Through His kindness and grace, God meets our spiritual needs in abundance in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Ephesians 1:3

says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

We need several spiritual blessings, but none is more important than our need to be saved from the consequences of sin. Sin is our greatest threat because it separates us from God who is our hope and our salvation. Sin causes people to become spiritually sick, needing a spiritual physician. Thankfully, there is a balm in Gilead that heals the sin-sick soul. There is hope for the person who feels trapped and enslaved to sinful practices that destroy their lives. Matthew 9:10-12 says, "Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, 'Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?' But when Jesus heard this, He said, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.'"

The Lord Jesus is in the saving business. He said to the tax-gatherer, Zacchaeus, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). His very reason for coming into the world was to save sinners. First Peter 2:24-25 says, "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls." Every stripe, every wound, every blow that Jesus endured was to bring healing to your soul, to bring forgiveness and transformation.

First Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." In Christ, we die to the enslaved, sinful life and can begin fresh and born again to a new life free from sin and following righteousness. God not only frees us from the sin, he helps us change our hearts so that our lives take a different direction. Romans 12:2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Taking the sin away, He gives our hearts a new focus, and that's the will of God.

The will of God is indeed good; it lifts up, blesses everyone, encourages righteousness, and brings an inexpressible joy. When people have lived according to God's will, they find it truly is acceptable as a way of life. It is indeed the best way to live; and people who are willing to do God's will realize that it truly comes from God (John 7:17). Not only is it good and acceptable, the will of God is perfect. When people are unwilling to accept the will of God, they settle for something less. They settle for something that can never give them what God's will gives them. What does Jesus give us?

First, Jesus gives us faith. The more we know about Jesus, the more He will build our faith and trust. John 20:30-31 says, "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." When we read Scripture and study who Jesus is and what He was able to do, it builds our faith in Him. The confession of Christians is that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God. His love, His miraculous powers, His teaching, and His resurrection point to His divine nature as God's Son.

Whether we trust in God matters. People who lack confidence in God lose out on the blessings that God offers to believers. Proverbs 3:5-7 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your

heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.” Rather than live by our own rules, let’s have faith in God and in His ways. If we don’t believe what God says, we don’t believe God.

Second, Jesus gives us hope. First Timothy 1:1 describes Jesus as our hope. Matthew 9:36-38 says, “Seeing the people, He (Jesus) felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’” The world has historically lived in chaos with false ideologies, which leave people with confusion and uncertainty. Jesus brings grace and truth, which gives us hope.

Even in times of temptation, the Lord gives us hope. Hebrews 4:14-16 says, “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Third, the Lord Jesus gives us and teaches us about love. First John 4:19 says, “We love, because He first loved us.” Without love, we profit nothing and we are nothing. The Lord Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). The love of Christ has made our world a better place. His love teaches us to share with others. Without the love of Christ, our world would be a sad and evil place.

Fourth, the Lord Jesus came to give us truth. He Himself is the source of truth. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus said to those Jews who believed in Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Jesus answered Pilate and He said, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37).

Fifth, Jesus gives us strength, especially in our times of weakness. The apostle Paul suffered much during his lifetime and often went through times when he had few financial resources. Paul said, “I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:12-13).

When we face those times of temptation, the Lord also provides the strength that you and I need to overcome the devil. Paul encouraged the church, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:10-11). In Christ, we have strength to stand firm when we’re challenged.

Finally, the Lord Jesus provides for us a future. While secular disciplines can tell you nothing about what happens to you after life is over, the Scriptures give us confidence of

eternal life. The Lord has graciously provided for those who remain faithful to Him a home in heaven. Paul speaks of his own confidence, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Likewise, James speaks of the Lord's gracious blessing to those who endure. James 1:12 says, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." Because of Christ, we have a home in heaven with God awaiting us.

The Lord Jesus spoke plainly to a church in Laodicea that thought they had everything they needed. In our affluent society, many think they have outgrown God and don't need Him anymore. In some cases, the people who think they don't need Him are the very ones that need Him the most. Listen to the words of Jesus again in Revelation 3:15-20, "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you (Jesus says) to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me." Is the Lord Jesus waiting for you to answer the call of the gospel or the call to let Him back into your life? If you have closed your heart to Jesus, isn't it time that you returned to Him before it is too late?

What do you think about Jesus? Have you seriously considered Him? Have you ignored Him or forgotten Him? When people live without Christ, they have spiritual needs that go unmet. They may not realize at first why they have this hole inside of them, but each of us has a space inside that only the Lord Jesus can fill. The Lord Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

The Lord asks us to deny ourselves, take up a cross daily, and follow Him. He wants nothing less than a total commitment. Many people play with their faith and wonder why it doesn't work for them. They rarely pray, rarely worship at church, rarely study the Bible and wonder why their faith has so little meaning or value. Why not give Christ your all?

To become a Christian, place your faith in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins and turn to the Lord, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water. Through baptism, God washes away our sins with the blood of Jesus Christ that was sacrificed on the cross. When we're baptized, the Lord adds us to His church and regards us from that day forward as born again and children of God. Why not become a child of God today?

## The Word Was God

### John 1:1-4

Today, we're looking at reasons why we should believe that Jesus is Lord! Jesus truly is Lord, but don't take my word for it. Let's examine the evidence. God desires that we believe, love, and obey Him. We're interested in what God says about every matter. That's why we repeatedly go back to the Scriptures.

Today, we're going to take a close look at Jesus Christ to determine who He is, why He came to earth, and why it should matter to us. One thing is clear: Jesus of Nazareth is unique!

Whether as a spiritual teacher, a prophet, a worker of miracles, or a friend there's never been a person to equal Jesus Christ. No one has done so much to lift humanity out of sin and into a righteous life as He taught people to repent. No one has taught love, compassion, and forgiveness like He did. Jesus helped us to understand what God is like. In ancient times, people sought to appease the wrath of God; but because of Jesus, we can know God's grace and become the children of God.

In today's lesson, we're going to explore the deity of Jesus Christ. Yes, the deity of Jesus! The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was Divine. Though some say he was merely a man and others suggest that He was nothing more than a perfect man, the Bible never hesitates to recognize He has always been Divine in nature. If He is Divine, then He is worthy of our study, of our faith, and of our obedience. If Jesus is Lord, then we should love and serve Him with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our strength. Let's examine the Scriptures.

Our reading today comes from the Gospel According to John 1:1-4.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

This helps us to understand Jesus as the Word who was in the very beginning. Let's pray together. O Father, we're thankful that You from eternity have loved us and had a plan for us that we might have eternal life and live with You. Father, we're thankful for Jesus who died for our sins. It's in His name we pray, Amen.

"In the beginning was the Word." The "beginning" refers to that period before there was time, as we know it, before there ever was a universe or life. To say the Word was in the beginning means that He was not created. God created men, but the Word has always existed; He was in the beginning. The passage says, "and the Word was with God." The word "with" means that the Word accompanied God and had a relationship with the Father. Then the text says, "and the Word was God." Here we have the Word described as Divine, yet He was with God. What does this mean, "with God" and "was God"?

Genesis 1:1, gives us a little more information. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." In Genesis 1:26, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the

earth.” Here we have the word “us” used. Let “us” make man in our image. Are there Gods? No, but there are persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We only see a glimpse of this in the Old Testament, but we’ll see it more clearly in the New Testament.

John 1:3 says about the Word, that is Jesus, “He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” God, the Father, was not alone in creation. The Lord Jesus was with Him and was the means by which everything was made. Nothing was made without Jesus Christ.

The New Testament says about Jesus Christ, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:15-17). Jesus Christ is the power behind our creation. Everything has come into being through Him and for Him.

Some people hear the phrase, “firstborn of all creation,” and wrongly assume that Jesus was the first created being who created everything else. But when they say that, they misunderstand what the Bible is saying. He is not the first created being. He is firstborn of all creation. “Firstborn” is a title, a description of His place over all creation. The role of “firstborn” doesn’t necessarily have anything to do with priority in time but in his place of preeminence. Colossians 1:18 says, “And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.” He is first in everything having to do with this world. He created it and sustains it by His power. He must have first place in everything!

In spite of His preeminence, Jesus was humble and obedient to His Father, and His example teaches us how to be humble and obedient as well. The Bible says, “Have this mind (or this mindset or this attitude) among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count (regard) equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus, in the beginning, and through time has always lived in glory with the Father in Heaven! He lacked for nothing through all of those ages. He was unlimited or infinite in knowledge and in power. Everything was and is His. He was in the permanent form of God. He always has been and always will be divine. But the Lord Jesus saw the wickedness of mankind and out of love chose to empty Himself and become nothing so that He could save a lost and sinful world. The Bible says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

He loved you more than His own life, and He was willing to empty Himself so that you might be saved. He became a man with all the physical limitations of humanity. Though he existed



in the form of God, He took on flesh like a man. The Bible says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son (or the only begotten Son) from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). For the time He lived on earth, Jesus lived as both God and man. As a man he suffered death, and as the Son of God he suffered for our sins so that you and I might live forever.

Jesus Christ was full of both grace and truth. If you think about that, you'll realize only a Divine Being could be full of grace and truth. He has the grace to forgive us and the truth to show us the right way. Titus 2:11-14 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." The Bible here calls Jesus "our great God and Savior." Only Jesus could offer His body as a sacrifice so that He might purify us, forgiving us of our sins and making us new people.

It's not strange to refer to Jesus as God. The prophet Isaiah by inspiration prophesied about John the Baptist, "A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God'" (Isaiah 40:3). John was preparing the way for Jesus, whom Isaiah calls the Lord and our God.

Likewise, the book of Hebrews directly refers to Jesus as God. The Hebrew writer quotes the inspired psalmist (Psalm 45:6-7) and he says, "But of the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions'" (Hebrews 1:8-9).

The Hebrew writer continues, "'You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end'" (Hebrews 1:12, quoting from Psalm 102:25-27). To speak of the Son, Jesus, as Lord, to recognize He is God is not unusual. Who else but a Divine being could lay the foundation of the world and have no end? Jesus told the Jews, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Jesus was with God and was God. Because of this, we can know what God is like. John 1:18 says, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God (or "the only God" as the English Standard Version puts it) who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him (that is, God the Father)." The Lord Jesus explains the God of Heaven to you and to me. Because Jesus lived on earth, we can understand better what God is like. Jesus is God in the flesh, and He explains God to us. The Lord Jesus said, "'If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.' Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us'" (John 14:7-9). Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how

can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" Jesus shows the character, the love, and the power of Almighty God.

The Lord Jesus told the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." So, the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." The Bible makes it clear Jesus has always existed and will always exist. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

In the book of Revelation, Jesus proclaimed to John, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Revelation 1:17-18). Jesus has indeed always lived. Death on the cross could not hold him. He conquered death and rose again. Jesus has all the power of a Divine Being.

When Jesus rose from the dead, the disciples were fearful; some doubted the testimony of the women that He had risen. Jesus suddenly appeared to the apostles who had hidden themselves in the upper room, and they saw Him. John tells about Thomas: "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe'" (John 20:24-25).

After eight days, His disciples were again inside, and Thomas was with them. Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, "Peace *be* with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed" (John 20:29).

Jesus did not rebuke or stop Thomas when he said, "My Lord and my God." Paul stopped the people of Lystra from worshiping him and calling him Zeus and Barnabas Hermes. Paul said to them, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you" (Acts 14:15). But Jesus didn't stop Thomas, because He indeed is our Lord and God.

Revelation 22:8-9 reveals how John fell down to worship an angel. But the angel told John, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God." Jesus did not speak like this angel spoke. He accepted worship from Thomas as Lord and God.

Colossians 2:9-10 says, "For in Him (that is, in Jesus) all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority." My friend, have you made Him Lord of your life?

Let's pray together. O Father, help us to always look to Your Son, Jesus, as our Lord. And to serve Him with a full heart and may He have first place in everything. It's in His name we pray, Amen.

Because Jesus emptied himself, took the form of a servant, and died upon the cross, God

honored Him. Philippians 2:9-11 says, "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

After His resurrection, Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). It's incorrect to say, as some do, that Jesus will have authority when He comes again one day. Jesus already has all authority. He is already King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14). He's already the One to whom each of us must give an account. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). My friend, do you believe that Jesus Christ is now Lord?

To become a Christian, believe in Jesus Christ as Lord. Be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Him. The gospel calls us to love and obey the Lord with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. If you believe Jesus is Lord, you will turn away from sin and live for righteousness. This is repentance. With faith and repentance, we should confess Christ and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of our sins as Acts 2:38 teaches.

## Jesus and His Promises

If I could stand on the highest hill and speak with the loudest voice, I would say, “God keeps His promises!” Today, we’re considering Jesus and His promises. A promise is only as good as the one who makes it and his ability to keep it.

We love it when someone keeps a promise; but we’re unhappy when someone breaks a promise. You’ve probably suffered the heartache of a broken promise, or you may have made a promise to someone and found that you couldn’t keep your word. Those things disappoint all of us. People may be well intentioned, but we’re all weak and forgetful. God, however, isn’t weak or forgetful; He keeps His promises.

God is faithful, loyal, and trustworthy. You can count on Him. Moses explained, “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). Moses went through lots of struggles in His life, but He never gave up on God to keep His promises.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul faced afflictions, struggles, conflicts, and even death; but he said about God, “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24). He didn’t doubt, but he said, “But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him” (that is, Christ), “they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20).

Our reading today comes from words of Peter on the Day of Pentecost when he’s preaching to the Jews. He concludes his sermon by saying, “‘Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.’ Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ Peter said to them, ‘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. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.’ And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation!’ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:36-41).

Joshua is one of my favorite characters in the Bible. The Scripture always speaks well of him, and he was a courageous and faithful leader in Israel. Joshua lived through the ten plagues; he crossed the Red Sea on dry ground; he led Israel into battle; he ascended Mount Sinai with Moses; he spied out the promised land and gave a good report with Caleb; he stood beside Moses in all the wanderings; and he led the people into the promised land. Yes, he crossed the Jordan River on dry ground. He fought until the Israelites had conquered all the land that was promised to Abraham.

When he was an old man, he called all Israel together, and he said, “Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed” (Joshua 23:14). Here

is a man who saw God in action for many decades of his life, even when things seemed nearly impossible! Yet he never wavered in his faith that God would keep every promise!

We can trust God to keep His promises for many reasons. First, God is all powerful; and nothing is impossible for Him. God can easily do things that you and I cannot do. Job said, "I know that you" (speaking about God) "can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted" (Job 42:2). Jeremiah 32:17 says, "'Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.'" I am reminded of Ephesians 3:20-21, which says "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Yes, God can and will keep His promises!

Second, God loves us and provides for us, His people. We only need to look at the cross to know how much the Lord loves us. First John 4:10 says, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation" (the atoning sacrifice) "for our sins." God sacrificed His Son—and I tell you that this is no small or easy gift. Paul explained, "He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). God is not stingy with His love and care for you and me!

Third, He is the God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). The book of Hebrews describes the very character of God when He makes promises. "So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope that set before us" (Hebrews 6:17-18). God's character guarantees His oaths and promises. You can count on God!

So... let's think about some promises that we have in Christ. It matters greatly whether we're in Christ or out of Him. God's promises are for those who love Him and follow Him. First, Jesus promises those who love, believe, and obey Him to forgive their sins. Hebrews 8:12 says, "For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." Forgiveness is such a great blessing. Second Corinthians 5:19 says, "in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them." When God forgives, He makes friends with us and no longer holds our sins against us.

When the guilty people at Pentecost asked what they needed to do, Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself" (Acts 2:38). Ananias told Saul of Tarsus, "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name" (Acts 22:16). The atoning blood of Jesus Christ will wash away our sins when we repent and are baptized. God promised it and God will do it! When we meet God's conditions, God keeps His promises.

A Christian will sometimes find himself still committing sins and still in need of forgiveness. First John 1:7 says to the Christian, "But if we walk in the light, as He is in

the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Cleansing comes to Christians who walk in the light. John continues, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). We must be honest with God about our sins and confess them. God then responds by cleansing us from all unrighteousness—every sin. Jesus also stands by Christians with the Father. Christ doesn't want us to sin, but He knows our weaknesses. John wrote, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate (somebody who will stand beside us) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2). Oh, I'm thankful the Lord Jesus "always lives to make intercession" for me.

Fourth, Jesus promises that God will take care of us. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:31-33, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." If we'll put God first, He'll provide our needs. David wrote in Psalm 37:25, "I have been young and now I am old, Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken Or his descendants begging bread." Paul said in Philippians 4:19, "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Hebrews 13:5 reminds us, "Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.'" God will take care of us.

Fifth, God promises to listen to our prayers. The Lord Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:7-11). God knows what we need even before we ask. He will indeed answer our prayers!

Even in times of great stress and difficulty, we can call out to God. While he was bound with chains as a prisoner and in danger of death, Paul wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7). When we call out to God, He hears us! He'll set a guard around our hearts and minds to give us that peace that passes all understanding. Oh, that's a powerful reason to rejoice!

Sixth, God's love will never leave us. Romans 8:35-39 says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor

angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." No matter what has happened to you there's never been one moment when the Lord God didn't love you. We can say with Peter, cast "all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Seventh, Jesus will not give us more than we can bear. The Lord Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). The Lord gives us a livable faith and a bearable burden! Christianity is not an impossible religion. You can live the Christian life and you can go to heaven! Some people imagine God has no interest in saving them, but that's simply not true. God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4). God takes no delight in people losing their souls.

Last, Jesus has prepared a place for you. Jesus knew that when He died He would go to be with the Father who sent Him, according to John 7:33 and chapter 16:10. He promised, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you, for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3). We have hope of eternal life and of living with God in heaven forever.

Ephesians 2:4-7 says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." God wants to save you and bring you home to heaven so He might bless you for all eternity. This is our hope! What a marvelous promise!

The question for many of us is not whether God is faithful to us but whether we're going to be faithful and obedient to Him. Many who start out strong in faith and attend church regularly grow weary and fall away. They stop reading the Bible, praying, attending worship, giving to God, being kind to others, and avoiding sin. They meant to do right but drifted away from God. Hebrews 2:1-3 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?" My friend, are you right with God?

God will forgive and redeem you only after you first place your faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God; second, repent of your sins and follow the Lord; third, confess your faith; and fourth, be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Being baptized into Christ takes place when we're immersed in water, and that means we're baptized into His death, and His blood washes us clean from sin and gives us newness of life.

## Jesus Is Lord Matthew 17:1-5

What does it mean to say, “Jesus is Lord”? Today, we’re examining the Scriptures to understand more fully the meaning of the phrase, “Jesus is Lord.” God created us as free moral agents with the ability to choose for ourselves what we will do or not do. God desires that we know the truth and that we be saved eternally. He sent Jesus to earth to redeem us with His blood, and He gave us His Words to teach and guide us in His ways so that we may live with Him forever. We respond to His love and grace by hearing and obeying His Words. That’s why Scripture is necessary to study.

The term “Lord” is found about 700 times in the New Testament. In common form, it would mean something like “sir.” This word refers to a master of a slave. A master or lord owned his slaves and had complete authority over their lives. The word “LORD,” capitalized in the New Testament, often refers to Jesus Christ and signifies His divine authority over all things. First Corinthians 8:5-6 says, “For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.”

To call Jesus “Lord” means we recognize that we belong to Him. He has control over our life on earth and our eternal destiny after this life is over. He is our Master, and we are His servants. To call Jesus “Lord” also recognizes His divine nature as our Creator and our Judge on the last day. Since Jesus is Lord, we must listen to Him and obey Him.

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to Matthew 17:1-5, and here Jesus appears to three of his disciples in His glory.

“Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves and He was transfigured before them. And His face shown like the sun and His garments became as white as light. And behold Moses and Elijah appeared to them talking with Him. Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish I will make three tabernacles here; one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking a bright cloud overshadowed them. And behold, a voice out of the clouds said, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him.

That is great advice to us, to listen to Jesus.

The word “Lord” is an English translation of a word that God uses to describe Himself. When Moses spoke with God at the burning bush, he met the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God was sending Moses to Egypt to deliver the children of Israel from bondage. When Moses asked this God what His name was, God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations” (Exodus 3:14-15).

The phrase, “I AM WHO I AM,” comes from four letters in Hebrew, YHWH. No one knows precisely how to pronounce this name because the Israelites held it to be sacred. Moses said,



“Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death” (Leviticus 24:16). Some today pronounce this word, “Yahweh,” while others use the word, “Jehovah.” When you see the word “LORD” with all capital letters in our English Bibles, it refers to this word in Exodus 3.

To call Jesus “Lord” means we see Him for what He truly is! First, we must recognize Jesus as the Lord prophesied in the Old Testament. All history points to Jesus Christ as Lord and Christ. Isaiah prophesied that a voice in the wilderness (John the Baptist) would call out, “Prepare the way of the LORD, make his paths straight” (Isaiah 40:3). John used the word “LORD” with capital letters to refer to Jesus Christ! This shows the divine nature of Jesus as one of the Godhead.

When Peter preached the first gospel sermon on the Day of Pentecost, He declared Jesus to be Lord, quoting from Psalm 110:1. Peter said, “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:32-36).

Soon afterward, Peter, in Acts 3:22-23, emphasized the authority of Jesus Christ, pointing to the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18-19. Moses said, “The LORD God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.”

Second, we must realize that Jesus is the risen Lord. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He revealed His authority and power. Do you recall doubting Thomas? John 20:24-28 says, “But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were saying to him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’ After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.’ Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”

The resurrection of Jesus is the proof that Jesus is Lord and the Son of God. His resurrection matters. If Jesus is not the resurrected Lord, you will not be raised from the dead on the last day. You remain in your sins and have no hope. Paul said, “For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living” (Romans 14:7-9).

Third, the New Testament speaks of confessing “Jesus is Lord.” First, we heard the confession of Thomas that Jesus was “my Lord and my God.” Second, Romans 10:9-10 says, “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised

Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” Third, Paul said, “For this reason also, (because Jesus obeyed the Father by dying on the cross) God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11). No matter who you are or what you believe today, one day you will bow the knee and confess, “Jesus is Lord.”

Fourth, Jesus is Lord means He has universal authority. In John 17:2, Jesus said the Father had given Him “authority over all flesh.” After His resurrection, Jesus said to His disciples, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). In Acts 10:36 Peter said, “He is Lord of all.” Paul acknowledged, “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him” (Romans 10:12). Ephesians 1:20-21 says when God raised Jesus from the dead, He “seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”

That Jesus rules over all creation is clear; “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:16-17). “All things” includes both you and me, whether we know it or not!

Jesus has personal authority over my life and my soul. Jesus once asked His disciples, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). He knew that many people would acknowledge Him as Lord and yet not obey what He teaches. He said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness’” (Matthew 7:21-23). If you call Jesus “Lord,” then you must not practice lawless ways. You cannot be presumptuous and ignore what He commanded. You cannot live by your own rules and still call Jesus “Lord.”

To call Jesus Lord means we respect His moral teaching as well. Second Timothy 2:19 says, “Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.’” If you claim to belong to the Lord and worship Him but live a wicked life, your life shows whom you really serve. Ungodly words and ungodly ways cause the name of the Lord to be shamed.

Titus 2:6-8 says, “Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.” What a shame that some people who wear crosses or have them tattooed on their bodies do and say disgraceful things. They may call Jesus “Lord,” but they don’t treat Him as Lord.

What we believe and practice as Christians matters! Colossians 3:17 says, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God

the Father.” If we act in His name, we should respect His authority. When women began speaking out in the assembled church, Paul said, “The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says” (1 Corinthians 14:34). He knew some would not like that. So he added, “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized” (verses 37-38).

The Lord Jesus means what He says. He said, “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word that I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” (John 12:48). Christ will not judge by opinion polls, current cultural ideas, or by human creeds. He will judge us by His written Word. The apostle Paul said, “Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:9-10).

The Lord is in control of our lives and of our souls. James 4:14-15 says, “You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’” You don’t know what your life will be like tomorrow or whether you will be alive. You are in the Lord’s hands to do as He wills. If this is true, then recognize and obey the Lord!

To be right with God means we not only recognize Him as Lord, but we show it in our lives. We love Him with all our hearts and we love others. We love the truth and we live moral lives.

James 1:12 says, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” Will the Lord bless you when He comes in His glory? Will He recognize you as His servant and bless you?

We choose whom we serve. We can selfishly choose to serve our desires or serve the Lord. The Lord wants to be our Savior and our Master, our Lord. He has graciously offered salvation and eternal life. If we ignore or reject His gracious offer, we’ll lose out on Judgment Day. Paul said, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

If Jesus is Lord, I want to please Him. In hard times, I want Him near. First Peter 3:13-15 says, “Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

We must take Christ seriously and set Him apart as Lord in our hearts! Is Christ the Lord in your heart? Do you believe and trust Him? Have you given up your sins and turned to Him in repentance? Are you willing to confess Him publicly? Have you been baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins?

## Jesus Will Return

Jesus promised to come again for His own. Are you ready for the second coming? People have many strange ideas about what will happen at the end of time, but the Lord has taught us clearly in Scripture what will happen. The Scriptures are always the measure of spiritual truth, and we can do no better than to investigate them daily. Since the Bible will one day be our judge, we need to know what it says and take it seriously.

The Lord Jesus said, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3). Jesus went to the Father in heaven to prepare a place for His followers and will one day return for them. This is a precious promise.

When Jesus ascended into heaven after His resurrection, "while they (the apostles) were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:9-11). When Jesus comes again, every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7). We'll have no doubt; the Lord keeps His promises!

Our reading today is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Paul is encouraging the church at Thessalonica about the second coming of Jesus.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The need to sing praise to God is always important. Hebrews 13:15 says, "Through Him (that is, Jesus Christ) then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." One day God's people will gather in heaven to worship God in song and to praise His holy name! What joy!

As believers, we live with the knowledge of the Lord Jesus coming again to receive His own. We'll meet Him in the air and live with Him there eternally. We meet Him there and stay with Him there. It's indeed a precious promise to know that He cares enough to come for us and take us to the place that He's been preparing for us in the Father's house. We have no basis for thinking that the Lord Jesus will return to earth once again. That was not His promise. Rather His promise was to welcome us to the place that He has prepared. That is in heaven. He's preparing for us, and we need to be prepared for Him.

The Lord Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

But of that day (that is, the day heaven and earth pass away) and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Matthew 24:35-36). Mark 13:33 adds, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." No one knows the time when Jesus will come again; many have prophesied various times, but all have failed. From as early as 70 AD to 2012 AD, men boldly said the Lord would come and the world will end, but they didn't know and they proved to be false prophets.

First Thessalonians 5:1-2 says this about the time Jesus will come again: "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night." Second Peter 3:10 echoes this statement and gives a little more information. "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."

What will happen when Jesus comes again? While we do not know when He will come, we can be confident of what He will do when He comes. The Scriptures reveal several things will occur when Jesus returns. First, a great sound will mark his arrival at the end of time. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). The Lord will descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; we'll hear Him!

Second, when Jesus comes again, He will not be coming alone. He's coming with all His angels according to Matthew 25:31. He's also coming with those who are "in Christ" but have died. First Thessalonians 4:13-14 says, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."

Third, the dead will all be raised! While the "dead in Christ will rise first," this doesn't mean they're the only ones who will rise on that day. The Lord Jesus promised, "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). The resurrection of the righteous will take place at the same hour as the resurrection of the wicked. There is only one general resurrection hour. Paul said, "there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (Acts 24:15). Some think the wicked will simply cease to exist, but the Lord says the wicked will face a resurrection of judgment.

Fourth, those still alive on earth at his coming will be changed. "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:50-52). The physical body that you have now was not designed for heaven but was designed for this earth. We will have an imperishable and glorified body in heaven. Philippians 3:20-21 says, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state (the body we have right now) into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to

subject all things to Himself.”

Fifth, “the dead in Christ will rise first. And then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Some think the Lord will set foot on the earth for a thousand years when He comes again; but there will be no human life on earth following the return of Christ. We’ll meet Him in the air and will always be with Him, and we’ll be with Him there and nothing will happen here. This planet will be destroyed by fire. We look for something new, and that is what the Lord has been preparing for us, this new place. The future life of the saints will be in a totally new place, unlike this one.

First Peter 1:3-4 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

Sixth, the final judgment will occur. This is an appointment that we must all attend. Some will stand before the judgment seat of Christ with confidence, while others will have great dread, because they know they have rejected the Lord. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he’s done, whether good or bad.” We cannot escape this appointment.

The apostle John, in the book of Revelation, reveals what will happen at the judgment. Revelation 20:11-12 says, “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” The basis of our judgment will be the written Word of God. The Scriptures will outlast culture and popular opinions to judge us on the last day. As we saw in Matthew 24:35 the Words of Jesus will last longer than heaven or earth. The Lord Jesus said, “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” (John 12:48).

Seventh, the righteous and the wicked will be separated and assigned their eternal destinies. Matthew 25:32-33 says, “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.” Some will enter into a resurrection of life, while others will enter a resurrection of judgment.

Matthew 25:34 says, “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” They cared for others and were obedient to the Lord. Matthew 25:41 says, “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’” Those on His left will enter the same place that God prepared for the devil and his angels. The Lord Jesus Himself said, “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:46).

Eighth, on Judgment Day the righteous will enter heaven to live with God eternally. Revelation 21:3-4 says that God Himself will dwell among His people; “and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be

any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” Only the righteous will dwell in heaven. God promised, “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.” (Revelation 21:7). The apostle Paul showed confidence when he said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). I hope that you can say the same! That the Lord will award a crown to you on that day.

Those who are unrighteous will enter a place of outer darkness, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Revelation 21:8 says, “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” This is nothing to doubt or ignore. The Lord Jesus said, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

The Lord doesn't want anyone to be lost and face eternal punishment. First Timothy 2:3-4 says, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Again, 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” You don't have to be lost; instead you can put your faith in the Lord and follow Jesus. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.” Is Christ your Savior? Have you obeyed Him? Are you right with Him? When He comes again will He be coming for you? To bless you! Or when He comes again will He come to raise you up to judgment.

Second Peter 3:11-13 warns and encourages us, “Since all these things (heaven and earth) are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.” Since we have this hope we ought to live godly and righteously. We watch and pray, so that we do not enter temptation. We stay busy doing the will of God.

What sort of person are you? Do you take God seriously? If the Lord is coming one day to bless the sheep and punish the goats, which are you? John 3:36 says, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Do you believe? And have you obeyed the Lord?

To become a Christian, one must believe if he wishes to please God (Hebrews 11:6). He must repent of his sins (Luke 13:3). He must confess Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Lord (Romans 10:10); and he must be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of his sins, just as Peter said in Acts 2:38. Baptism is an immersion in water; but baptism into Christ is a baptism into His death (Romans 6:3-4). In baptism, the blood of Jesus washes away sin (Acts 2:38 and 22:16) and it also gives us newness of life. Become a Christian today and begin worshipping regularly with a church of Christ near you!