

"Back to the Bible"

Why should we go back to the Bible? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring why we should return to the Bible and why it matters.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God's will matters to us, because it mattered to Jesus. The Lord Jesus simply said in Matthew 7:21 that, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Whether we do as God requires will affect our eternal destiny. And I hope you'll take the will of the Lord seriously, because the Lord Jesus will one day judge you on the basis of God's will. Now if you obey, you can have hope. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Some think going back to the Bible is out of touch with the present, but they misunderstand. The teaching of Jesus found in the New Testament was for all time, including today! The Holy Spirit led the apostles into all the truth, and all the truth means all the truth. The idea that a change in time means a change in the doctrine of Christ is one of the biggest lies ever told.

Just as the Jews needed to go back to the old covenant, so Christians need to return to the new covenant found in the New Testament. Jeremiah 6:16 tells the sad story of Jews turning from God to adopt sinful ways. Jeremiah cried to the people to return; and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.' But they said, 'We will not walk in it.' Many today have rejected Scripture. And they say that they will not walk in the teaching of Jesus.

Now we offer this study on back to the Bible free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website at, www.searchtv.org. And you can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Jeremiah 6:16 to 19, and examine our desperate need to go back to the Bible.

Our reading today comes from the prophet Jeremiah chapter 6 verses 16 to 19. And there Jeremiah as a prophet is very sad because of the direction people are going and rejecting the word of God.

Thus says the LORD,
"Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths,
Where the good way is, and walk in it;
And you will find rest for your souls.
But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'
"And I set watchmen over you, saying,
'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!'
But they said, 'We will not listen.'
"Therefore hear, O nations,
And know, O congregation, what is among them.
"Hear, O earth: behold, I am bringing disaster on this people,
The fruit of their plans,

Because they have not listened to My words,
And as for My law, they have rejected it also.

Sadly the people of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day saw their city destroyed and even the temple. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we pray that we may have ears to hear and hearts that will be listening and obeying to what You teach us. Father help us to go back to those ancient ways and to do what is right. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

While some reject going back to the Bible, there are good reasons for embracing the plea to restore first century Christianity in this twenty-first century. Christians today need to return to the truth found in the New Testament and reject human traditions and unbiblical practices. Here are some important reasons for going back to the Bible.

First of all, we must recognize the eternal nature of the gospel. The gospel was to last until the end of the age. And of course Matthew 28:18 to 20 says that Jesus came to the apostles, "He said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" The words of Jesus Christ will last beyond this life until heaven and earth pass away. You remember, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words (Jesus said) will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

Peter revealed in 1 Peter 1:23 to 25 that the gospel message of the first century that causes us to be born again would remain forever. He wrote: "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 (the gospel) that was preached to you." Now we must take note how people are saved. The Scriptures are clear: people are saved and born again when they obey the gospel truth preached to them.

James 1:18 says, "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures." For this reason, he later says in verses 21 and 2 of James, "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." We must go to the word to find the truth about our salvation. We're saved today the same way people were saved in the first century. Time doesn't change things and it doesn't change the gospel, and men cannot make up new ways of salvation. When they change the gospel, they put their souls and your souls at risk.

Paul wrote in Galatians 1:6 to 8, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another (there isn't any other); only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!" I tell you there is only one gospel; you cannot be saved by any change to that gospel.

There is a finality to the gospel preached in the first century by the apostles. The faith, the teaching of Christ, was once for all time delivered to the saints. And what they said in the first century is for all centuries. Jude wrote to the church in Jude 3 "Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the

faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” We must contend for the apostles teaching that came to them by the Holy Spirit. It stands as the whole truth, and it’s not optional.

Second, the teaching of Christ demands obedience Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31 and 2). Now true disciples will not depart from the words of Jesus. To abide in His words means to make one’s home in, continue in, and to dwell in that word. It means one never leaves but remains in His words. The Lord Jesus said in John 12:48, “The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.” Since we’ll be judged by the teaching of Christ on the last day, we are accountable to Him forever.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 that, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” Not everyone who claims to be a Christian will be saved; only those who are obedient to the will of God.

As we have seen in Galatians 1, there’s no other gospel, no other way to find salvation other than through the one gospel found in Scripture. And those who teach a different gospel will be condemned eternally. The apostle John wrote in 2 John verses 9 to 11 that, “Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.” We must not fellowship or support those who teach false doctrines. We don’t want to be guilty of their evil deeds.

Third, we must realize that God expects His people to repent of doctrinal error. We should never suppose that all error is moral in nature; one can be in error and honestly believe that what he’s doing or believing is correct. John called the false teaching about Christ evil in 2 John 9 to 11. You see the perversion of the gospel was enough for Paul to pronounce an anathema, a curse, on those who teach a different gospel. When people teach doctrinal error, and that error goes unchallenged, people in time may believe that it’s the truth. When error doesn’t get challenged and shown to be false, people who learn the truth have an obligation to give up the false doctrines and repent of believing them. We cannot be right with God if we hold fast to false doctrines of men.

The Lord Jesus rebuked the church at Pergamum for allowing false teaching to permeate the congregation. And His solution for them was repentance. The Lord said in Revelation 2:14 to 16, “But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.”

The Lord Jesus also commanded the church at Thyatira to repent of their doctrinal error and toleration of false doctrines. We too should take notice and repent of the false teachings of our time. We must not tolerate false teaching but must turn to the truth. Churches cannot tolerate error and still have God’s approval. The Lord Jesus commanded the church at Thyatira to quit tolerating the false teaching of Jezebel. Jesus gave her and her children time to repent and promised to punish her and her children if they didn’t repent (Revelation 2:20 to 23).

Paul warned Titus about those who caused quarrels that were dividing the church in Titus 3:9 to 11. He said, “But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is

self-condemned.” Division in the church is sinful, and those who introduce false doctrines that split churches commit a terrible sin. Because of that, churches must reject one who teaches a heresy that splits the church.

Paul recognized in his own day some who were creating division by teaching false doctrines. He warned the church at Rome in Romans 16:17 to 18, “I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.” We, too, I tell you today, must mark and turn away from those who cause dissensions, that is splits, and teach deceptive things. Just because someone calls himself a Christian doesn’t mean that he is teaching the truth.

God placed elders in the church as shepherds who are to watch after the flock and protect them from error. Paul said to each shepherd in Titus 1:9 to 11, “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine (sound teaching) and also to rebuke those who contradict it. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. Elders have a responsibility to keep the church pure and free from error.

Going back to the Bible means repenting from our doctrinal errors. The Lord Jesus is in the business of saving and purifying. He purifies broken and sinful souls. Yes. But repentance is indeed a gift of God to heal us from the brokenness of sin and falsehoods. The one who supported the lies of the antichrist in 1 and 2 John “participates in his evil deeds” (2 John 11). And true disciples remain in the words of Jesus and His inspired apostles and prophets. When people abide in the words of Jesus, the truth will set them free (John 8:32). And when people repent of doctrinal error, the Lord heals and restores their souls. Now this shows the necessity of coming back to the truth. “My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5 verses 19 to 20).

Jesus said in Matthew 15:13 and 14 about the Pharisees, who were binding man-made laws that, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.” Why would you put your hopes and salvation in the hands of man-made religion? Jesus declared that human religion and human traditions will not stand before God. God won’t recognize churches that follow their human traditions rather than His divine will.

In his Prescription against Heretics, Tertullian in the second century declared that any doctrine not as old as the apostles is thereby condemned by the “silence of Holy Scripture.” He said heresies that arise later than the apostles, “would stand already judged on the mere ground of time, being all the more spurious because they were not even named by the apostles.” So examine the church where you are a member and compare what they teach and practice with the New Testament. If they don’t follow the words of Jesus written down by the apostles and prophets of the first century, then they will not stand. If you follow the lead of a blind man, you both will fall. So stand fast with God’s word. You won’t regret it.

Let’s pray together. Heavenly Father we’re thankful for Your word which always leads us to the truth and to what is right. Help us to obey Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

In our uncertain world, where false teaching and lies abound, we need an anchor of the soul to hold fast to the Lord. The apostle Paul admonished Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13, "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." Now to retain means to hold fast and follow the sound or healthy words that he learned. Paul didn't urge Timothy to follow the world or start his own church the way he likes it. No, he wanted him to hold fast to the pattern already in place. And we too must learn to hold on to what we know is from God and true!

We need to hold fast to the divine pattern of salvation, the pattern of worship, and the pattern of the church. The Lord Jesus has all authority in His church. When we leave the patterns that He set down for His people, we reject His authority. When we fail to take His words seriously, we fail to respect Him. You see without faith, it's impossible to please God (Hebrews 11 and verse 6). And if you don't believe what He says, you don't believe Him.

There's only one gospel, one faith, one baptism, and one Lord. And so hold fast to them. To be saved, put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ and the gospel message. Turn from sin, both moral and doctrinal. Follow the Lord's teaching found in the New Testament. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Unite with Christ by following the pattern of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus by being baptized into Christ and into His death (Romans 6 verses 3 to 7). And according to Romans 6:17 and 18, when you obey from the heart that form of doctrine (that pattern of doctrine) delivered to you, you are freed from sin and become servants of righteousness. Oh, why not obey the Lord today.

We hope that today's study about going back to the Bible has helped you focus on doing God's will. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH on YouTube anytime! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and then like the programs. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses and bible studies. Don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you to draw close to God.

Show God your love by worshiping at church. If you are looking for a church home, we'll be glad to help you to find one. But you need to come and have a church family. There's probably a church of Christ near you. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.