

"I Believe in Christ"

We number years from the birth of Christ, and some historians regard Him as the most influential person who ever lived. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Is Christ God's Son? Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. I love the word of God, because it tells me of God's love and grace. I learn of God's power and His concern for my welfare. I learn of God's provision to forgive my sins through Christ, to make me His child, and to give me a home in heaven. I love God and His promises, and I pray that you do too! Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Some question whether Jesus really lived; they say he is a myth like Superman or Harry Potter. The historians of old, however, never question his existence. Historians from ancient times like Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, or Lucian all speak of Jesus Christ. Pliny the Younger, a Roman governor, and the Emperor Trajan wrote letters to one another discussing what to do with Christians who believed in Jesus Christ. The 27 books of the New Testament, dating from the first century, speak of Him as real. The existence of the church from the day of Pentecost points to His great influence.

Many have recognized Jesus as the most influential, significant, and important person who ever lived. He is certainly the greatest religious leader of all time, and no one can compare with Him. He lived a sinless life and blessed everyone who knew Him. Even His enemies knew of His ability to work miracles. After He raised Lazarus from the dead, the enemies said in John 11:47 to 48, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs (that is miracles). If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." Yes, Jesus lived and worked miracles!

Now, we offer this study free, in fact we're offering a little book this week, or this month, saying "Why I Believe". And if you'd like a copy of it or a CD of our study and you 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, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Romans 10:14 to 17, and explore our need to come to Jesus.

Our scripture reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 10 verses 14 to 17. And in this he talks heeding and obeying the word of God because we believe. Let's read.

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

And yes we need to be hearing what God says and obeying it. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that preachers were sent and that Your word was put forth. Help us to believe in it and help us to be obedient to Your word. In Jesus name, Amen.

When we speak of Jesus, we're speaking of someone unique. There is no one like Him in all of time. The Old Testament predicts His coming into the world. Even the wise men from the East saw His star. They knew He would be born in Bethlehem, because Micah 5:2 says, "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days." They knew He would be born of a virgin, because Isaiah 7:14 says, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Matthew confirms this prophecy of Jesus' birth, that Jesus was born of a virgin and called Immanuel, which means "God with us." (Matthew 1 verse 23).

Jesus criticized the Jews in John 5:39 to 40. He said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." He knew the Scriptures spoke about Him, and told His apostles in Luke 24:44, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and (in) the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

The apostles appealed often to the prophecies of the Old Testament to show Jesus was the promised Messiah. Peter preached at the temple in Acts 3 verse 18, "But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled." Paul told the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia in Acts 13:29, "And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb." Paul later reasoned with the Jews at Thessalonica in Acts 17 verses 2 and 3, "from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ (the Messiah).'"

The prophecies of Jesus proved true. He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem of Judah. The wise men did come to visit Him, because they saw His star. Jesus was born according to the prophecy of Daniel during the fourth great kingdom, of the Roman Empire. These are not accidents. Daniel 2:44 says, "And in the days of those kings (that is the kings of that forth empire) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever." Jesus established His kingdom, His church, during the first century; and it stands to this day!

Isaiah prophesied of Him in Isaiah 9 verses 6 to 7, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."

Isaiah also prophesied that Jesus would bear the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6 and also verse 8), that He would be silent before His enemies (verse 7), and His grave would be assigned with wicked men and a rich man (verse 9). He was crucified between two criminals and was buried in the tomb of a rich man Joseph of Arimathea. Psalm 41 and Psalm 55 predict Jesus would be betrayed by a familiar friend, and Judas Iscariot betrayed Him. Zechariah 11 verse 12 says Jesus would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, and He was (Matthew 26). Psalm 22:18 predicted that they would divide His clothes and cast lots for them, and the Roman soldiers did just that (John chapter 19).

On the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, when Peter with the twelve proclaimed that they were eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Peter quoted from Psalm 16 verses 8 to 10, "I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul

to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay." The body of Jesus was in the tomb from Friday until Sunday, Sunday morning, three days in Jewish time. It did not decay, but God raised Him from the dead.

Jesus Himself predicted in Matthew 20:18 to 19, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up." David had predicted a thousand years before the time of Christ in the Messianic Psalm 22 verse 16, "a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet." Crucifixion was unknown in the days of David, a thousand years before Christ. The Babylonians started crucifying people in the sixth century B.C. The Greeks then learned it from the Babylonians, and the Romans learned it from the Greeks.

The Romans would only crucify non-citizens. The Jews would have stoned Jesus, if they had the legal right to execute Him. Instead, the Roman soldiers had to put Jesus to death. Well, this fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 2 and verse 2 that "the rulers (plural) would take counsel together against the Lord and against the Anointed." The chief priests and Pontius Pilate agreed to put Jesus to death, just as it Psalm 2 prophesied.

We might ask the question, "Could Jesus really work miracles? Did He really rise from the dead?" While some deny miracles are possible, the apostles were eyewitnesses and insisted that He arose! Acts 1 verse 3 says, that "He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God." This is why these men were willing to risk persecution, imprisonment, and death to proclaim His resurrection to the world.

After beatings and scourging, after being nailed to a cross, after a spear piercing his side, and after being wrapped head to toe in cloths soaked and myrrh and aloe, Jesus was surely dead in His tomb. He wasn't merely wounded and revived on His own. The tomb was closed with a giant stone, weighing three to four thousand pounds, and sealed with the governor's seal. No one could move this large stone without breaking the governor's seal and breaking the law. It would take several men to roll away the stone.

You remember the Jews asked Pilate for a Roman guard to protect the tomb and to make it as secure as they knew how (Matthew 27:66 to 67). They knew the prophecy of Jesus, that He said He was to rise after three days. Well, we shouldn't suppose that only a few Roman guards were there. The scholars suggest between ten and thirty Roman guards were at the tomb. These were hardened men, capable of gambling over the clothes while crucifying the Lord Jesus. They wouldn't be frightened by a band of disciples wanting to steal a dead body, but they would be frightened by mighty angels who could roll an "extremely large stone" away! God raised Jesus from the dead and declared with power that He is the Son of God (Romans 1 verse 4).

Luke 24 and in those first seven verses says: "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." They had heard the prophecy of His resurrection but they came to anoint His body. The angels told them to

go and tell the apostles. Well, the apostles doubted at first, but Jesus proved Himself to them, appearing over a period of forty days.

Matthew reveals the guards went into the city and told the chief priests, who gave them a large sum of money to start the rumor that the disciples stole the body, while they slept. Well, the priests said that if the guards got into trouble with Pilate, they would get them out of trouble. Did the disciples steal the body and pretend that He resurrected? Well, first, of all Roman soldiers knew the harsh penalty for sleeping on watch; they wouldn't risk their necks sleeping. Second, only something miraculous like the angels moving the stone would frighten the guards. A small band of untrained Jews wouldn't frighten these soldiers. Third, the soldiers were asleep. Well, how did they know the disciples stole the body if they were sleeping? Fourth, there were grave clothes left in the tomb. Why would disciples leave the grave clothes and fold them up? Peter and John saw the clothes folded (John 20 verses 6 and 7). Last, why didn't the Sanhedrin make the apostles, while they were in custody, confess to the crime of stealing the body of Jesus.

All the Jews had to do to prove Jesus didn't rise from the dead was merely to produce the dead body. This would prove the apostles were false witnesses. Ah, you can be sure they left no stone unturned in their search for the body of Christ. But they didn't produce a body, because they couldn't. Nor were they successful in stopping the preaching about Jesus. From Pentecost onward, the church increased rapidly, because the people were convinced Jesus had risen from the dead. They had seen his miraculous power for three years, they knew He was real, and they believed the preaching of the twelve.

The Jewish authorities persecuted the early church. Acts 8 and verse 3 says, "But Saul [of Tarsus] was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison." But they didn't stop the church; they merely scattered the people. Christians went everywhere preaching the gospel of Christ. For this reason, Saul went to Damascus to catch some disciples of the Way and take them bound back to Jerusalem. But, God sent a bright light that struck Saul blind, and Jesus revealed himself to Saul, telling him to go into Damascus and there it will be told him what he must do (Acts 9 and verse 6).

Saul prayed and fasted for three days. God had a bigger role for Saul. When Saul repented of his sins and was baptized. God washed away his sins when he was baptized (Acts 22 verse 16). Saul of Tarsus became the apostle Paul who spent the rest of his life preaching the gospel and suffering to tell men of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, an enemy of the cross, his conversion into the apostle Paul, a believer, reveals the power of the truth about Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose again to give us eternal life. And the one who overwhelmingly opposed Jesus Christ (that's Saul) became blind physically for a time but had his eyes opened spiritually. He became a Christian, an evangelist, and an apostle. I hope your eyes will be opened too.

Let's pray. Oh Father help us to believe with all of our heart and soul in Jesus Christ as Lord. Risen from the dead. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Jesus was the most loving, most caring, most truthful person who ever lived. He was truly sinless. You may have many loved ones, but no one has ever loved you like Jesus. No one ever died for your sins but Jesus, and no one else could. 1 Peter 2:22 says, "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth." That's what made Him a pure sacrifice for us. 1 Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit." Jesus suffered much for you, so that He could bring you

to God. In Christ, we have forgiveness of sins, we have eternal life, we have a family in the church, and we have a home in heaven. No one else can offer you these things but Christ.

What will you do with Jesus? You can ignore Him, you can refuse Him, you can oppose Him, or you can follow Him. What you choose will make the difference in your destiny. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:24, "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." There are many good reasons to believe in Jesus, and I've only spoken today of a few.

If you believe, repent of your sins and be baptized into Christ. That's how and when your sins are forgiven and you begin your relationship with Him. Baptism is an immersion in water; at that time God washes away your sins and gives you newness of life (Romans 6 verses 3 to 7). Oh, won't you become a Christian today?

We hope today's study has deepened your faith in Christ. Now, if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, 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, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. You can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! And so we ask you to subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." It's all one word. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money, we're not here to exploit you. We're here to help you to get to heaven and know the Lord Jesus.

I tell ya there's no better day than today to get your life back on track by going to church. There is probably a church of Christ in your area. Why not worship with them today? If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.