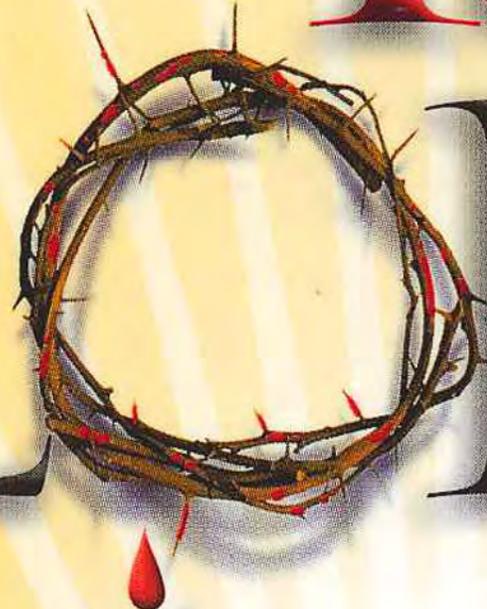


JESUS
— IS —
LORD



PHIL SANDERS

SEARCH PROGRAMS

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Topics subject to change without notice

OCTOBER 2 – THE WORD WAS GOD

This lesson begins a new series on why we should believe Jesus Is Lord! Jesus was the Divine Word of God in John 1:1. He came and dwelt among men in order to redeem mankind. For this reason God highly exalted Him so that everyone will confess that He is Lord to the glory of the Father.

OCTOBER 9 – MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

From ancient times, God predicted the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Moses and all the prophets spoke of the coming Messiah, the Son of David, who would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed. We'll see how Jesus fulfilled these prophecies.

OCTOBER 16 – THE CROSS

From time to time we each need to take a close look at the cross of Christ. In this lesson we focus on what the Lord Jesus did for us on the cross, how He loved His Father, and how He loved each of us.

OCTOBER 23 – THE RESURRECTION

The Christian faith rests on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Did Jesus really rise from the dead? It is worth our time to re-examine the evidence for the greatest event of all history, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

OCTOBER 30 – HOW JESUS CHANGES LIVES

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. By saving them, He changes their hearts, their lives, and their destinies. We can choose no Lord greater than Jesus Christ, who brought hope, life, and immortality to mankind.

“The Word Was God”

Our Bible reading today comes from the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verses 1 through 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.” That’s from the Gospel of John and it’s a reading from God’s Holy Word. Let’s pray together. Father, we are thankful that You created us and made us through the Word. And, Father, we are thankful that the Word came into this world and lived among us in Christ Jesus; and it is through His name we pray. Amen!

This passage says clearly, “In the beginning was the Word.” The “beginning” was that period before there was time as we know it, before there ever was a universe or life on earth. 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. Well, what does this mean, “with God” and “was God”?

Well, Genesis 1 and verse 1 gives us a little more information. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” And in verse 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;” let “us” make man that’s used. “Let us make man in our image.” Well, 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 each person clearly in the New Testament.

John 1 and verse 3 says about the Word, that is Jesus, that “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 in Colossians 1, verses 15 to 17 that, “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.” Jesus Christ is the power behind our creation; and everything has come into being through Him and for Him.

Some people hear the phrase, “firstborn of all creation,” found in Colossians 1: 15 and they wrongly assume that Jesus was the first created being who then created everything else. But when they say that, they really misunderstand what the Bible is saying. He is not the first created being. He is the firstborn of all creation. The word “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 that, “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,” that is have first place. You see, He is first in everything having to do with this world. He created it and He sustains it by His power; and He must have first place in everything!

Now, 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 in Philippians 2, verses 5 through 8, "Have this mind in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but He emptied himself, (He made himself nothing) taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, (that is, in flesh) He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Jesus in the beginning and throughout time lived in glory with the Father in Heaven! He lacked for nothing. He was unlimited or infinite in His knowledge and in His power. Everything was and is His. He was the permanent form, in the permanent form rather, of God. He has always been and will always 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 reach out to a lost and sinful world. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 8 and verse 9, "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."

You see, He loved you more than His own life, and He was willing to empty Himself out so that you might be saved. He became a man with all the physical limitations of humanity. And though he existed in the form of God, He also took on flesh like a man. The Bible says in John 1 and verse 14, "And the Word (that is Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only begotten Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." For the time that He lived on earth, He lived as both God and man. As a man he suffered death, and as the Son of God he suffered for our sins that you and I might live forever.

Jesus Christ was full of grace and truth. And if you think a little about that, you'll realize that only a Divine Being could be full of grace and truth; grace to forgive us and truth to show us the right way. The Bible says in Titus 2, verses 11 to 14, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly desires (or 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 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 in Isaiah 40 and verse 3 that, "A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.'" John, you see, was preparing the way for Jesus Christ, 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 (that is Psalm 45, verses 6 and 7) and says in Hebrews 1, verses 8 and 9, "But of the Son (that's only Jesus he is talking about here) of the Son He (God) 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.'"

The Hebrew writer continues in verses 10 to 12 quoting from Psalm 102, verses 25 to 27; he says, "And, 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 have no end." To speak of the Son Jesus as Lord and to recognize that He is God is in the Scriptures. Who else but a Divine being could lay the foundation of the world and have no end?

Jesus told the Jews in John 10 and verse 30 that, "I and the Father are one." You see, Jesus was with God and yet was God. Because of this, we can know what God is like. John 1, verse 18 says that, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God (or "the only God" as in the English Standard Version puts it) who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." That is Jesus explains the Father. The Lord Jesus explains the God of Heaven to you and to me; and 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.

In John 14, verses 7 to 9, 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." 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 (Jesus said that) He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" Jesus shows us the character, the love, and the power of Almighty God.

The Lord Jesus once told the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." Well, 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, verse 8 says that, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

In the book of Revelation, Jesus proclaimed to John in Revelation 1:17 to 18, "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." Jesus has always indeed lived. Always! The death of the cross could not hold him. You see, He conquered death to live forever and forever. Jesus has all the power of a Divine Being.

When Jesus arose from the dead, the disciples were fearful and some doubted the testimony of the women that He had risen from the dead. And you will remember that Jesus suddenly appeared to the apostles who had hidden themselves in the upper room, and they saw Him. John tells about Thomas in John 20, verses 24 to 29; it 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 I put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' Well, 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 with 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.'"

Now, Jesus didn't rebuke or stop Thomas from saying to Him, "My Lord and my God." You'll remember that Paul stopped the people of Lystra from worshiping him and calling him Zeus and Barnabas Hermes. Paul said to them in Acts 14, verse 15, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you." But Jesus didn't stop Thomas, because He indeed is our Lord and God.

The Bible tells how John in Revelation 22, verses 8 and 9 fell down to worship at the feet of an angel. But the angel told John, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren and the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; (then he said) worship God!" Jesus didn't speak like this angel spoke. You see, He accepted worship from Thomas as Lord and God.

Colossians 2, verses 9 and 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 Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we are thankful that through Your will we have come to know that Jesus is Lord and Christ; and that He is Divine. And, Father, may our hearts always set upon serving Him; and, Father, it is in His name that we pray. Amen!

Because Jesus emptied himself and took on the form of a servant and died upon the cruel cross of Calvary, God honored Him. The Bible says in Philippians 2, verses 9 to 11, "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 the Father."

After His resurrection Jesus said in Matthew 28 and verse 18, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." It's incorrect to say, as some do, that Jesus will have authority when He comes again. My friend, Jesus already has all authority. He is already King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17, verse 14). He is 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 and verse 10). My friend, do you believe Jesus Christ is now Lord?

To become a Christian, believe in Jesus Christ as Lord. Be willing to deny yourself, to 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. And if you believe Jesus is Lord, you're going to turn away from sin and you are going to live for righteousness. This is repentance. And with faith and repentance, we should confess Christ and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of our sins as Acts 2:38 teaches.

“Messianic Prophecies”

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Luke chapter 24, verses 44 to 48. “Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations—beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.’ ” That is a reading from God’s Holy Word. Let’s pray together. Father, we are grateful that Your love has prepared for us a Messiah who came to save us and to be our Lord. Help us to follow Him all the days of our lives. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen!

In John chapter 4, Jesus had a discussion with a most unlikely person, a Samaritan woman who had been married five times and was living with a man. Men didn’t usually speak to women in public, and Jews had almost nothing to do with Samaritans, but even this Samaritan woman knew something about the promised Messiah. “The woman said to Jesus, ‘I know that Messiah is coming (that is He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He’ ” [that is the Messiah] (John chapter 4, verses 25 and 6). Jesus confessed to this woman that He was indeed the Messiah!

These writings of Moses and the prophets did something that no other book in all antiquity ever did; they predicted the future. That their predictions came true was a sure sign that God was behind them. The Lord said in Isaiah 46, verses 9 to 10, “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.’ ”

In Isaiah 48 and verse 3 God said, “I declared the former things long ago And they went forth from My mouth, and I proclaimed them. Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.” He explains in verse 5, “Therefore I declared them to you long ago, Before they took place I proclaimed them to you, So that you would not say, ‘My idol has done them, or my graven image or my molten image have commanded them.’ ”

The Lord Jesus said to the Jews in John 5, verses 46 and 7, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me (the Lord said). But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?” And the apostle Peter could proclaim in the temple to all in Jerusalem, “But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled” (Acts 3 and verse 18).

J. Barton Payne calculated that 27 percent of the entire Bible contains predictive prophecy. Norman Geisler observed that, “This is true of no other book in the world. And it is a sure sign of its divine origin (that is, the Bible’s divine origin).” He added that, “The Bible is the only book in the world that has precise, specific predictions that were made hundreds of years in advance and that were literally fulfilled.”

Now, contrasting the Bible with other holy books and the writings of the pagan religions, R. S. Foster said, “No well accredited prophecy is found in any other book or even oral tradition now extant, or that has ever been in existence in the world. The oracles of heathenism are not to be classed as exceptions. There is not a single one of them that meets the tests required to prove supernatural agency, which every Scripture prophecy evinces.”

When you consider the predictions of God's Word from the beginning, they are marvelous. After Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, God cursed the serpent and said in Genesis 3 and verse 15, "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." This must have been puzzling to Adam and Eve, but it set in motion God's plan for the ages to redeem mankind from sin. The seed of the woman would one day conquer the seed of the serpent.

As Genesis continues we learn from Genesis 12, verses 1 through 3, we learn that the seed of Abraham would bless all nations. In Genesis 21, we learn that the promise came through Isaac and in chapter thirty-five, he would come through Jacob. Genesis gets very specific in chapter 49, verse 10, "The scepter (the Bible says) shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." The word Shiloh is a reference to Jesus Christ, who would be the King of Israel.

Moses revealed God's promise of a coming prophet in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 18, verses 15 to 19. The Bible says that, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, and you shall listen to him. This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.' And the LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.' "

Unlike the powerful lightning and earthquake that took place on Mt. Sinai, God sent His Son Jesus as a baby into Bethlehem. He spoke with the authority of God, but appeared as a man like his countrymen. The Word became flesh, filled with glory and grace and truth. In Acts chapter 3, the apostle Peter pointed to Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Moses' prophecy. In John 1, verse 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

God also made a promise to David in 2 Samuel 7, verses 12 to 13 that, "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant (now that is in the singular) after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Now, all the kingdoms of the earth come to an end, but this descendant of David would establish a kingdom that would have no end.

In Psalm 110, David prophesied of a coming Lord and king who would raise His scepter from Zion (that is Jerusalem). David wrote by inspiration in Psalm 110, verses 1 to 4 that, "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.' The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, 'Rule in the midst of Your enemies.' Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew. The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.' " Now, Moses spoke of the coming one as a prophet, and David said that He would be a king and a priest. And Jesus was all three: prophet, priest and king.

Isaiah in several passages tells us much about the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah 2, verses 1 through 4 reveals that the Messiah will come in the last days and His law will go forth to all nations from Jerusalem. Isaiah notes that His ways will bring peace. Isaiah 7 and verse 14 predicts, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His

name Immanuel." This marvelous passage deserves a whole program. Jesus was indeed born of a virgin as Matthew 1:18 and Luke 2 and verse 7 reveal. The Lord Jesus is truly Immanuel, "God with us." Jesus was born of woman according to Galatians 4, verse 4 and was indeed the seed of the woman who would bruise the head of the seed of the serpent.

God predicted in Isaiah 9, verses 6 to 7, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. And the zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this."

It is in Isaiah that we learn the coming Messiah would also be a suffering servant. Isaiah 52, verse 13, continuing from there through Isaiah 53, verse 12 contains some very specific prophecies about the death of Jesus Christ. It reveals how He as the Lamb of God silently offered himself for our sins. Isaiah 53, verses 5 and 6 says, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, and Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him." Only Jesus Christ could fit this prophecy. No one else in all of history died for the sins of mankind.

It was Daniel who predicted the Messiah would come and set up His kingdom that would last forever in the days of the fourth empire, the Roman empire and he mentioned this in Daniel 2 and verse 44. Then in chapter 9, verses 24 to 27, he predicted the year the Messiah would come, noting that He would come before the temple and the city were destroyed. Now, we know that Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 70 AD. The Messiah had to come before that time, and only Jesus fulfilled the prophecies. Now, let me encourage you who are still hoping for a future Messiah to take a second look at Jesus of Nazareth. You see, the Lord Jesus set up His kingdom in the first century according to the prophecy of Daniel, and that kingdom is the church. And that kingdom lasts forever.

The prophet Micah tells of the little village where the Messiah would be born. The Bible says in Micah 5, verse 2, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be a ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." This ruler to be born in Bethlehem was not simply a human baby. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. Jesus is that Word that John spoke about. He was with God and was God (John 1 and verse 1).

You'll remember the wise men came from the East following the star, to find the King of the Jews. They asked Herod to find the exact place of His birth. Herod called for the high priests and the scribes to answer the question, and they pointed to the prophecy of Micah 5 and verse 2. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judah, Bethlehem Ephrathah, and no place else. But Jesus fits this prophecy as well. Herod also took it so seriously that he sent his soldiers to kill every child from the age of two years old and under in the town of Bethlehem. And even this cruel act came as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah 31 and verse 15 of Rachel weeping for the children.

There are other prophecies pointing to Jesus. Isaiah 40 and verse 3 predicts, "A voice calling, 'Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.'" Jesus said this voice refers to John the Baptist, who preached repentance, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." You see, he was preparing the way for the Lord, for God. He prepared the way for Jesus Christ our Lord.

Just as Isaiah 53 predicted Jesus' death, so Psalm 16 prophesied His resurrection. The Bible says in 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." Jesus came forth from the dead on the third day; and God did not abandon Him to death but raised Him up. The apostle Peter quoted this passage and said that all the apostles were eyewitnesses of His resurrection. They saw its fulfillment and proclaimed at Pentecost to everyone that Jesus Christ was both Lord and Christ (Acts 2 and verse 36). Let's pray together. Father, we are so grateful for all of those prophecies from Moses and the prophets that convince us that our Lord Jesus indeed is Lord and Christ. And it is through His name that we pray. Amen!

Some skeptics have suggested that Jesus of Nazareth, as a rabbi, naturally knew about these predictions and simply arranged the events of His life to fulfill these specific prophecies. But the predictions of Jesus would not be that easy to prearrange. How would you arrange to be born in Bethlehem? How would you manage to be born into the tribe of Judah? How would you make sure that the price of your betrayal would be precisely thirty pieces of silver? How would you arrange to be crucified with thieves? How would a crucified man arrange to have his enemies gamble for his garments?

Grant Jeffrey observed, "The truth is that, if you could arrange all these details, you would have to be the Son of God." There is no way that Jesus as a man could have controlled these events necessary for the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah. Furthermore, Jesus Christ despised dishonesty and deception; it was contrary to his character to pretend as the hypocrites do. Jesus was indeed a sinless person in whose mouth was no deceit.

You can put your trust in Jesus as Lord and as the Messiah without fear. He is the only person in all of history who could be the Messiah. He fulfilled all the prophecies of the Old Testament. He came to bless all nations with salvation. And if we want to receive His blessing and follow Him, we must believe with all our hearts. We must repent of our sins, changing our hearts and lives. We must confess Him before others and be baptized. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of our sins. Oh, be baptized into Christ and become a child of God and do it today.

“The Cross”

Our reading today comes from Romans chapter 5, verses 6 through 8. “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” A most powerful and important passage! Let’s pray together. Father, we know that Jesus was willing to die for us even when we didn’t deserve it. And, Father, we are so grateful for the love that He showed; and we pray, Father, that our hearts will show that kind of love toward You. In Jesus’ name, Amen!

What led Jesus to die on His cross? Well, there are several reasons; but one thing is sure: He put the spiritual needs of everyone else before His own physical needs. His death is the most selfless act of all time. Never has any individual given so much for so many. Never has any individual been willing to endure such shame and hostility so that others might benefit.

The Lord Jesus was willing to suffer that horrible death because of His love for His Father in Heaven. The Lord said in John 14, verse 31 that doing exactly what His Father commanded showed the world His love for the Father. The Father required a blood sacrifice to atone for sin. According to Hebrews 10 and verse 4, “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” Only the sacrifice of the sinless Son of God could atone for your sins and mine. We must thank God and thank Christ Jesus for His willingness to die in our stead.

The prophet Isaiah more than 700 years before Jesus explained this sacrifice in Isaiah 53, verses 5 and 6, “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.” We can enjoy an abundant life here on earth and an eternal life in Heaven, because of the sacrifice of Jesus, who bore the punishment that was due to us, so that we might have forgiveness and a life with God.

You see, Jesus was willing to be obedient to His Father, so He could open a way for salvation. Hebrews 5, verses 7 to 9 presents a marvelous picture of this obedience and how difficult it was for Jesus. The Bible says, “In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One that was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. 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.” It wasn’t easy for Jesus to obey His Father, but He obeyed out of love.

Second, the Lord Jesus bore the cross because of His utter love for you and me. Romans 5, verses 6 to 8, which we read a moment ago, described us as helpless, as ungodly, and sinners. We are helpless in the sense that we’re utterly incapable of reaching salvation and eternal life without Jesus Christ. We were once ungodly, that is, we pushed God out of our lives and neglected to do His will; and when we broke His commandments, we sinned against Him. Sin is a personal thing with God. We don’t merely break God’s commandments; we violate our relationship with Him.

Isaiah 59, verses 1 and 2 says, “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.” Sin is always, always offensive to God. All sin—your sin, and my sin.

Now, in spite of the offense of sin, the Lord loved us and wanted to restore a relationship with us, that is to make friends with us again. Reconciliation, that means that God no longer holds our transgressions against us (2 Corinthians 5 and verse 19). It means that our offense toward God is removed so that we can maintain a loving and close relationship with our God. And this is made possible through the blood of Jesus Christ, sacrificed on the cross. What He did for us was amazingly loving, opening a way to be close to our Creator, our God.

And I can still hear the words of the Lord Jesus, who was scourged and made to carry His cross through the streets of Jerusalem to the Place of the Skull. They removed His clothes and they laid Him on the cross. They nailed His hands and feet; and while they were crucifying Him, the Lord Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23 and verse 34). Jesus died to save you and me, and no one loves you and wants your salvation more than Jesus does.

The Lord's salvation for us makes a marvelous difference in our lives. The Lord removes our past sins, so that God no longer holds them against us; but the Lord knows that we're human and imperfect. He knows that we continue to sin, even when we don't want to. Even as Christians, we all live with the nagging reality of sin. And for this reason, the Lord constantly defends us and pleads our case for us and for our salvation before the Father. Jesus knows our weaknesses and yet He cares enough to provide a way for us to find forgiveness all through our lives.

First John deals with the Christian's imperfections and God's provisions. The Bible says in 1 John 1:7 to 10, "but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, then we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all (all) unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."

People who walk in the light; yes, they still need the blood of Jesus to cleanse them from sin. You see, walking in the light, is not perfectly sinless behavior. Nobody one can live a perfectly sinless life. If a Christian says, as some in ancient times claimed, that they do not have sin, they deceive themselves and the truth isn't in them. In fact, they make Christ a liar and aren't listening to His Word. What Christians must do when they sin is confess their sins to God and repent of them.

The Bible says in 1 John 2, verses 1 and 2, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." The word propitiation refers to a sacrifice that atones for our sins, so that we may have peace and a relationship with God our Father. Jesus bore the punishment that we should have endured so that we might be redeemed and reconciled to God.

Jesus serves as an advocate for us every single day. We need a righteous advocate, a defender called to our side to assist us as we approach God. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 2, verses 3 to 6 that, "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. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time."

Hebrews 7 and verse 25 says that, "Jesus always lives to make intercession for them." Jesus, the Righteous sacrifice for our sins, is also interceding with the Father for you, begging for the continued forgiveness of your sins. You might recall how Peter denied the Lord three times. But before this took place Jesus told Simon Peter in Luke 22, verses 31 to 34, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded

permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

Dear Christian friend, when you have sinned against God, remember Jesus prays for you too! He loves you enough to ask the Father to forgive you and to keep you in His grace and favor. I must tell you the Lord has made an amazing commitment to your salvation that includes the cross but it goes far beyond it. The Lord will stick with you all the way.

The Lord won't turn His back on you, but beware lest you turn your back on Him and forsake Him completely. You see, a person walking in the light confesses sin and stays with the Lord. But a person walking in darkness forsakes the Lord and lives for himself. And when he does that he loses his fellowship with God and the ongoing hope that he has in Christ. Oh, I wouldn't want to live one day; I wouldn't want to live one hour; I wouldn't even want to live one minute outside of the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

Third, Jesus on the cross taught us how to trust in God. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2, verses 21 to 24, “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but He kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and 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.”

Jesus suffered the worst man could throw at Him on the cross. Cruel men designed the cross to give the maximum punishment before death. Jesus was taken by force and bound as a common criminal in the Garden of Gethsemane. They falsely accused Him and wrongly tried Him. The High Priest and members of the Sanhedrin Council determined to put Him to death before the trial ever took place. Their witnesses were weak and their evidence was manufactured. Ultimately, they falsely accused Him of blasphemy for acknowledging that He was the Son of God. The Jews generally put people to death for blasphemy by stoning them, but the Jews sought to do more to Jesus. They sought for the Romans to crucify Him. They took Him before Pilate and Herod for condemnation.

Pilate wanted to release Him, saying four times that he found no fault in Jesus that was worthy of death. Pilate even had Jesus scourged in order to draw the sympathy of the crowd. When the Roman scourging—that's a horrible punishment—failed to touch the determined crowd, Pilate thought of the custom of releasing a prisoner at Passover. But the cruel crowd called for Barabbas instead.

Jesus endured the mocking and beating of the soldiers, yet prayed for the Father to forgive them. Jesus endured the nails driven through His hands and feet, the gambling over his clothes, and the cruel taunts of the Jewish leaders as He hung between heaven and earth.

And during all this suffering, Jesus never once sinned with His lips. He didn't revile or speak ugly words to those who mocked Him. He didn't threaten those who did violence to Him. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2 and verse 23 that He “kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.” He kept putting Himself into the Father's hands. And even with His last breath, Jesus said in Luke 23 and verse 46, “Father into Your hands, I commit My spirit.” This is a quotation from Psalm 31 and verse 5.

My friend, at the hardest moments of our lives, we too must learn to commit ourselves into the hands of the Father. First Peter 4:19 says, “Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.” The cross was exceptionally painful and incredibly humiliating, but Jesus bore it patiently and lovingly. He was able to endure the cross through His willingness to put Himself into the hands of His Father. He died to open up a way for us to live with God forever. May God be praised. Let's pray. Father, we are thankful that the love of

Jesus for You was so strong, and that His love for us was so strong, that He would bear Himself upon a cross for our sins. Help us to love You in that same way. In Jesus' name, Amen!

The Lord Jesus challenges us to take up our cross daily and follow Him. The Lord said in Matthew 10, verse 38, "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." The Lord has a cross for you and for me; and if we are to be worthy to wear His name and follow Him, we too must take up our cross.

Well, how do we take up our cross? The Bible says in Romans 6, verses 3 to 7, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who died is freed from sin."

When we place our faith in Christ, repent of our sins, confess His name, and are baptized into Christ, we're baptized into His death. The Lord shed His blood in His death and the Lord applies His blood to cleanse us from sin when we're baptized and we are baptized, of course, into the death of Christ. It is at that time that the old man of sin is crucified with Him. And throughout life we continue to carry our cross by serving the Lord Jesus. We hope and pray that you will take up your cross and follow Him today and serve Him the rest of your life.

“The Resurrection”

God’s Word in Matthew chapter 28, verses 2 to 7 says, “And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow; the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.’ ” That’s from Matthew chapter 28. Let’s pray together. Heavenly Father, we are thankful for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which encourages our hearts and helps us to know that there is eternal life. Father, help us to follow Your risen Son and to give You glory for all that He has done for us. In Jesus’ name, Amen!

The Lord Jesus predicted His death and resurrection. Jesus told His disciples 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.” This is an amazing and a specific prediction. Jesus not only predicted He would be scourged and crucified at the hands of the chief priests and the Gentiles but also that He would rise from the dead the third day. Only the Son of God could make such a prediction about His death and resurrection and see its fulfillment just as He predicted.

Before we can speak of a resurrection, we have to first examine the evidence that Jesus actually died upon the cross. That Jesus was beaten by the soldiers and then scourged is beyond dispute. All four gospel accounts speak of His scourging. A Roman scourging was not merely a beating. You see, many men died from scourging. The whip that they used lacerated the skin with sharp objects and caused the loss of much blood. The Romans did not limit their stripes to 39 as the Jews did.

You see, the purpose of the cross was to kill a person slowly and very painfully. While the nails went through the hands and feet were not of themselves fatal, the physical position of a crucified person hung upon a cross created tremendous pressure on the heart and lungs. A person had to pull himself up to breathe in and out. The cross gradually wore a person down to where he couldn’t breathe. In the case of Jesus, fluid surrounded his heart until it failed.

The reason soldiers would break the legs of a crucified person was to hasten their death. A person with broken legs couldn’t push himself up to breathe and would die quickly. They broke the legs of the two thieves; but these experienced soldiers found Jesus was already dead, so they didn’t break His bones in fulfillment of Psalm 34 and verse 20 that “not a bone of Him should be broken.” Instead, a soldier pierced His side with a spear, “and immediately (the Bible says) there came out blood and water” (John 19, verse 34). Now, this flowing of water and blood is a sure sign that Jesus was truly dead. If Jesus had not died from the crucifixion, He could not have survived this spear.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus asked Pilate for the body of Jesus, but Pilate would not release the body until it was determined proof positive that he was dead. Well, the two prepared his body for burial in a new tomb a short distance from where he was crucified. John reveals that they bound the body in linen wrappings with myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight, now these pounds are at 12 ounces to the pound. This burial process would have sealed Jesus in a mummy-like wrapping with spices sealing the cloth together. Well, bound up like this, Jesus—even if He by some

remote chance survived the crucifixion and the spear—why He couldn't have breathed and lived. Jesus was dead in the tomb.

The Pharisees and the priests went to Pilate and they requested a guard for the tomb. Matthew 27, verses 62 to 66 records what they said, “ ‘Sir, (they said) we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’ Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead, and the last deception will be worse than the first.’ Pilate said to them, ‘Well, you have a guard; you go and make it as secure as you know how.’ And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.” They were determined not to let anything happen to that tomb. They didn't merely post a couple of guards at the tomb. They made it as secure as they could. Some scholars suggest that there were as many as 28 guards at the tomb, and they would have been particularly watchful on the third day, when the threat was the very greatest. Now, the governor's seal meant that it would be criminal to mess with the tomb.

The Scriptures tell us that the women came very early on the first day of the week to the tomb, and they came to anoint the body of Jesus. This was their first opportunity since the Sabbath had passed; and they wondered, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And they realized the stone was “extremely large” according to Mark 16, verse 4. Now, scholars again suggest that this stone weighed between one and a half and two tons, three to four thousand pounds. And they knew that moving this stone was far beyond their ability and that it would take a number of strong men to move it.

Well, when they arrived they saw that an angel had rolled the stone away. The stone sat in an inclined track, and to open the tomb they had to roll this stone up the incline. Now, John 20 and verse 1 tells us that they took away the stone. Apparently it was picked up and moved out of its track away from the sepulcher. Well, how could a group of disciples tiptoe among some sleeping soldiers, pick up an extremely large stone, and move it away from the tomb? How could they break this official seal, move the stone, remove the body of Jesus undetected by the soldiers?

When the women reported to the apostles the tomb was empty, many of the apostles laughed and they doubted the women; but two apostles wanted to find out for themselves if the tomb was empty. Peter and John, you remember, ran to the tomb. John chapter 20 verses 5 to 7 says that they looked in the tomb and saw the linen wrappings lying there. They saw “the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.” Now, this is curious. Why would the disciples, if they stole the body, take the time to loosen the linen wrappings and leave them in the tomb, knowing that the guards were just outside?

Whatever understanding you have of this event, you must explain who moved the stone, how the tomb became empty, and who took the linen wrappings from the body of Jesus. The people who examined these events argue without hesitation that Jesus arose from the dead. According to Matthew 28, verses 11 to 15, the soldiers reported all these events to the chief priests, who paid the soldiers a large sum of money to lie and promised to keep them out of trouble with the governor. But down deep these soldiers and the chief priests knew the truth.

So, we now ask whether the testimony we have about the empty tomb is true. Is there some way that we can test the credibility of the report that we have of the resurrection?

Well, first, let's remember that Jesus believed and taught His people to be honest. The Lord hated hypocrisy and deceit. You remember that Jesus praised Nathanael for being a person in whom there was no deceit (John 1 and verse 47). And Jesus spoke of the devil as a liar and He condemned

lying in John 8 and verse 44. Well, how could His disciples abandon everything they had been taught and spread a lie throughout Jerusalem? By the way, all the Jews had to do to prove Jesus had not resurrected from the dead was to produce the body of Jesus. If the Jews produced the body of Jesus, they could end Christianity. But, you see, they never tried. Why! Because they knew they couldn't. All they could do was bribe the soldiers to lie and punish the disciples.

Now, let's look at the change in the disciples. Before the resurrection the disciples did not know for sure that Jesus had been raised on that third day; they didn't know that, they doubted it; and so they hid in the upper room with the door locked for fear of the Jews. They doubted and they laughed, you remember, when the women came and told them that Jesus had risen. Their hard hearts kept them from believing until Jesus revealed Himself to them. You remember that one apostle, Thomas, persisted in his disbelief even when the others insisted they had seen the Lord. Thomas said in John 20 and verse 25 that, "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, verses 26 to 29 says that, "After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. And Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.' And then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.' And 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.' "

Jesus appeared to the disciples and He proved Himself to them in a variety of ways. Luke 24:36 to 39 says that, "He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be to you.' But they were startled and frightened and thought they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' "

Acts 1 and verse 3 tells how Jesus "presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God." So strong did He convince them that we see a very different group of men at Pentecost than we do on the day that Jesus arose. After they disbelieved, hiding themselves as cowards, and doubting the prophecy of Jesus; Jesus then showed Himself alive with many convincing proofs.

So at Pentecost they were bold and unrelenting in their preaching of the gospel. They told everyone they were eyewitnesses of the resurrection. They called the people to repent of their sins, because they had crucified Jesus whom God for certain had made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2 and verse 36). In Acts chapter 3, verses 1 through 8 the early disciples endured beatings, those chapters, those first chapters; they endured imprisonment, but they wouldn't stop preaching Jesus as the Christ resurrected from the dead.

And when the Sanhedrin, that is the Jewish Council, commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus, Peter and John answered in Acts 4, verses 19 to 20, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." Oh, they were convinced that they must obey God and continue preaching the gospel.

In Acts chapter 5, the Council arrested the apostles, flogged them, commanded them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, and released them. But the apostles rejoiced "that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to

house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5, verses 41 and 2). They later suffered imprisonment, beatings and even death for their faith, but nothing kept them from continuing to preach Jesus as the Christ, risen from the dead.

Oh, the disciples didn't become rich or find it easy from their preaching. It was not a good situation; they suffered much to tell the story of Jesus. They stoned Stephen in Acts 7 and they beheaded James the son of Zebedee in Acts 12. Not one, not one, of the disciples ever denied the resurrection. They died for preaching it. According to tradition, they were all martyred for their faith except John. Would you die for preaching something that you knew was a lie?

The disciples gained no earthly advantage by preaching Jesus Christ. The only reason they spoke out so boldly about their faith was they believed Jesus was truly the Christ, the risen Son of God. And their bold faith assures us that we too can place our faith in Jesus as Lord. Let's pray. Father, we are thankful for the testimony of the Scriptures and for the lives of the apostles, how that they gave themselves preaching the truth and gave their testimony to us through the Word. Help us to have deep faith in Your Son. It is in His name we pray. Amen!

Saul of Tarsus was originally devoted to Judaism and a violent persecutor of the church, but He saw Christ on the road to Damascus. And his conversion is especially important in view of his earlier zeal against Christianity. He gave up everything to become a Christian. What he wrote about, when he wrote about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 is really the earliest documentary evidence that we have. You see, no one can satisfactorily explain the conversion and the later life of the apostle Paul except in the way that he himself explained it. You see, he had seen the risen Christ.

Some say Jesus fainted on the cross and revived in the cool of the tomb; but this doesn't explain how Jesus survived the linen wrappings, how He moved the stone, or how He frightened the guards to get away. Others say the apostles only imagined they saw Jesus after His resurrection, but this doesn't explain why there were linen wrappings in the empty tomb, how the stone was moved before the women arrived, or how the guards were frightened. Nor does it explain how they were able to touch Jesus.

Though we have barely discussed the evidence surrounding the resurrection, we have seen enough to say confidently with Peter and the apostles that God raised Jesus from the dead. And if He is risen, He is the Son of God and the Lord of all. According to John 12, verse 48 and Acts 17:31 He will one day judge you and me according to His Word.

Oh, to become a Christian believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, turn from your sins in repentance, confess Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins as the Bible teaches in Acts 2 and verse 38.

“How Jesus Changes Lives”

Our reading from God’s Holy Word comes from Colossians chapter 1, verses 9 through 12. “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.” That’s a reading from Colossians 1, verses 9 to 12. Let’s pray together. Father, we are so very grateful that through the Lord Jesus Christ our lives can change. We are thankful for the blood He shed; we’re thankful for the Word that You have given to us. And, Father, help us to be obedient to Your will always. In Jesus’ name, Amen!

All of my days I have watched the power of God turn people’s lives around. I have seen criminals become Christians, atheists become strong believers in Christ, sinners become saints, and addicted people become free. The power of God can work in your life, because the Lord Jesus is everything that He claimed to be. The New Testament records how He walked on water, turned water into wine, calmed the storm, healed the sick, set the captives free, gave sight to the blind, gave hearing to the deaf, gave speech to the mute, and gave hope to the despondent.

Wherever He went, Jesus lifted people up and gave them a new start in life. He opened the door with His teaching and His death on the cross for people to be born again, freed from all the trappings of their old man of sin. He was God’s true light in a world darkened by sin and bound for hell.

But Jesus did more than this. Jesus lived in a day when the human traditions and teaching of the time convinced many that God would never accept them. The Pharisees had made and observed many man-made laws that God didn’t give and they bound them on other people. Even to this day various denominations and religious groups believe and practice things that they invented but the Lord Jesus never taught. We believe that Jesus is Lord, and the only Lord. Only the Lord Jesus has the right to legislate to His church what they are to believe and practice. He didn’t give that authority to anyone.

In Matthew 28 and verse 18 the risen Lord Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” I tell you, there’s no authority in heaven or on earth higher than His authority. The Bible says in Ephesians 1, verses 20 to 23 that God “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. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Jesus is truly Lord of all and He has all authority. We should not think that He will someday have authority on earth. My friend, He is already Lord and King. He has all authority now and cannot have more authority than He already has.

If I call Jesus “Lord,” I need to treat Him as Lord. Jesus said in Matthew 7, verses 21 to 23 that, “Not every 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 will enter. 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.’ ” You see, serving the Lord means obeying His laws and commandments.

Now, in our culture we like to determine our own way. We don’t fully appreciate what it means to have a Lord and to belong to a Master. In ancient times, masters had complete authority over their

servants. Many today think the whole world should be subservient to them and to their desires. But when we take on the name of Jesus and we become His disciples, we give our lives to His service and we become His slaves.

The Lord said in Matthew 10, verses 24 to 25 that, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master." Our task as servants of our Lord Jesus is to become like Him, to think and act like Him, to love and live like Him, and to pray and obey like Him. Hebrews 5, verses 8 and 9 says, "Although He was a Son (of God) 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." Now, if we're going to honor our Lord Jesus, we must be obedient to Him just as He was obedient to the Father.

As Lord, Christ can turn our lives around. He has the power; He has the will; and He has the way to make a difference in our lives. And He will help us make changes, but He won't force us to change. Christ can transform our lives, but we have to let Him. You know, some people think Christ uses miraculous power to make these changes and He makes them irresistibly, but they're mistaken. The Lord rather reasons with us and works on our hearts, and He does that through His Word.

Isaiah 1, verses 18 to 20 says, " 'Come now, and let us reason together,' says the LORD, 'Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool. If you consent and obey, then you will eat the best of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.' Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken." The Lord God wants what is best for you and for me, but we have to be willing to trust and obey Him.

The power of Christ is not some mysterious or irresistible force. God doesn't arbitrarily choose some folks to be saved and others to be lost and then mysteriously force His will on us. No, that's a terrible doctrine of man, and it's an unscriptural doctrine. God rather helps whosoever will to change when they accept Him and obey His teaching, when they deny themselves and follow Him according to the teaching of the Word.

What power does the Lord use to transform our lives? Well..., the power is in the simple message of the gospel. And how much it changes our lives depends upon our hearts and whether we're willing to listen and to follow God's Word or not. Where is the power of God? First, it's in the Word of God. The Word of God brings us to faith. Romans 10 and verse 17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1, verses 21 that God chose the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

Again, John chapter 20, verses 30 and 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." The Word of God helps us to believe Jesus is the Christ, and that faith leads us to eternal life.

Second, here's how the Lord uses His power to help us. The Lord uses the power of love to reach into our hearts. The story of what Jesus did on the cross reaches deep into our hearts and moves us to love God. The Lord Jesus said in John 12 and verse 32, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." The cross demonstrates in undeniable terms the unfailing love of our Lord Jesus and the Father. Jesus said in John 15 and verse 13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends." Jesus showed the greatest kind of love towards us in dying for our sins, suffering the punishment that we deserved. Such love, I have to tell you, is beyond my full understanding.

People are willing to deny themselves, and take up their crosses daily, and follow Jesus as Lord, because they love Him. They've seen His love in the Word and they want to love in return. The Bible says in 1 John 4, verse 19 that, "We love, because He first loved us." People are grateful for all of God's wonderful promises and they know Romans 8 and verse 32 is really true. That verse says that, "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?"

My friend, we're not enslaved to God against our will. We serve God by choice, because we know our Lord Jesus is a loving master who will do us good and give us an abundant life (John 10 and verse 10). In addition to the forgiveness of sins and the daily blessings we receive from Him, He also adds us to His church and gives us a family to strengthen and encourage us. The church is a great blessing, and the Lord knew that we would need each other to grow in faith. The love of our brothers and sisters in Christ is essential to our spiritual growth. They stir us to love and good works.

Third, another way the Lord works His power on us is that the Lord uses the power of the truth to reach into our hearts. He is lovingly honest and straight with us about our sins and about righteousness. He uses the truth that's in the Word like a mirror for us to see ourselves as we really are and as God sees us. Such honesty may cut deep and hurt, but I would rather be hurt temporarily by the truth than to believe a lie and suffer much greater pain for eternity.

The Lord gives us the truth that hurts for a time but heals us. He corrects us in order to make our lives better and to help us to avoid the pitfalls of life. Some people think that when the Lord condemns sin, that He is mean and harsh. And I hear some people say that if you call certain sins sinful, that you're "unchristian." There seems to be in this day a kind of a knee-jerk reaction to saying anything is, that if we say anything is morally or spiritually wrong that we've done something terrible. Well, the best known passage of the Bible for some people today is "Judge ye not, that you be not judged" (Matthew 7, verse 1). But those who react quickly to calling sin sinful on the basis of Matthew 7:1 may need to think more about this matter.

The Lord Jesus also said in John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Honesty means that we hear all the Lord Jesus says not merely what we wish to hear. The same Bible that condemns murder and rape also condemns covetousness, lying, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and drunkenness. Christianity is not a pick-and-choose faith that allows us to tell God what we feel rather than to listen to His Word.

You see, the Lord greatly values His Word as truth. He said in John 8, verse 31 to 32 that, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." When we deceive ourselves by failing to hear what the Lord says, we remain enslaved to sin and death. But when we listen to the Lord's words and obey Him, we are set free from sin and become true disciples.

It is the Lord who determines who are true disciples on the basis of whether they continue in His Word. You see, the Lord has standards that He has clearly communicated and uses to make distinctions between true disciples and how they're different from deceived disciples. I count it a Christian kindness to learn the truth about sin and what I need to do to be saved. I would rather know the truth that can correct me than to be told a lie that leaves me in a false assurance of my salvation. You see, it's the work of Satan and very cruel to let people think they're saved, when they're really lost. The Bible still says in 1 Corinthians 13, verse 6 that love "does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth."

Fourth, and I love this. The Lord gives us the power of hope. We need hope to live spiritually as much as we need air to live physically. The Lord Jesus blesses His people with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. First Peter 1, verses 3 and 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." Oh, we have all the blessing of God in this life and heaven, too. Thank God. Let's pray together. Father, we are grateful for all Your blessing in this life, and for the power to change our lives. Help us to have the strength and the will to make those changes. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!

Jesus can transform your life, if you will let Him; but you have to let Him. You have got to give yourself to Him completely: body, soul, and spirit. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6, verses 19 and 20, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

The Father invested His Son in you, and the Lord Jesus gave His life so that you might be redeemed from sin and live a new and righteous life. God does not think that you are cheap. You are worth far more than what Judas paid for Jesus; you remember it was only thirty pieces of silver. The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:18 and 19 "that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

But if you want the blood, that purchased and redeemed you, to apply to your soul, you must obey the gospel. You must allow the grace of God to work in your life. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, and out of love repent of every sin, confess Jesus as the Christ and as your Lord, and be baptized in water to be saved. And when you're immersed in water, the Lord washes away your sins (Acts 22:16) and adds you to His family (Acts 2 and verse 47). That family is His kingdom, the church. You're purchased with His blood, and you belong to Him when you are baptized and Him alone. Humble yourselves, and turn your hearts, and seek the Lord.