

Program Transcripts

For December 2020



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY[®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

December 2020

Topics subject to change without notice

DECEMBER 6 – PRAISING GOD

Like Peter, there are times when we need to say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!” When we count our blessings, our hearts are filled with gratitude and the desire to praise the Lord.

DECEMBER 13 – WHERE COULD I GO?

When life falls apart and you have to pick up the pieces, where do you go? Where do you begin putting your life back together? Jesus has the only answer to our spiritual needs. He alone has the words of eternal life.

DECEMBER 20 – THE WORD BECAME FLESH

Jesus is the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh. The Lord Jesus became flesh and became the greatest blessing this world has ever known. In this lesson we’ll explore what Jesus came to earth to do.

DECEMBER 27 – JESUS IS COMING AGAIN

Jesus came in the first century to save humanity from sin. We do not when Jesus will come again, but we do know He is coming and what He will do. For believers, the second coming is a reason to rejoice!

Praising God

Like Peter, there are times when we need to say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!” Today, we’re exploring reasons to praise God. We look to God’s word for the answers to our chaotic and ever-changing world. He alone can make a difference in our lives and the lives of those that we love. When I think of my twelve grandchildren, I worry about the future. I want them to know the Lord and to know the truth about God’s love for them. I want them to praise God and bless Him with their lives.

Recently my friend and fellow preacher Gary Hampton, who lives in Jackson, Mississippi, shared some ideas from 1 Peter about reasons to praise God that got me to thinking about lifting up my voice to bless and praise God. This is not a new thing for those who love God. Revelation 4 speaks of the twenty-four elders who fall down before Him who sits on the throne in heaven and they worship Him. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

We owe everything to God. He created us, He sustains us, and He saves us from sin. James 1:17 says, “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” Our God and Father is worthy of glory, honor, and power. We must never take Him for granted or fail to recognize all that He has done for us. Do you praise God regularly or have you forgotten about Him? Many have stopped worshipping or even praying. What about you?

Our reading today comes from the first letter of Peter 1:3-5. Here he talks about how God has blessed us, and he’s praising God.

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, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Praising God is all about recognizing God’s sacred role in our lives. When we approach God to worship we are entering holy ground. Hebrews 12:28-29 says, “Let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.” God is holy, and our worship and service must show that we take God seriously. Peter blessed God for all that God has done for us. Let’s also bless or praise God with reverence and awe. Peter makes three reasons known:

First, we are born again of his mercy. First Peter 1:3 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.” Being born again as a new person in Christ and free from sin is a reason for anyone to give thanks. God gives us an opportunity for a new start and leaving the past behind. Everyone needs to come to Christ, even the strong leaders of the Jewish faith back in the days of Jesus needed it.

John 3:1-5 tells the story of Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who saw that Jesus came from God, and because of His signs or miracles, Jesus was to him someone from God. Jesus answered and said to Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he’s old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?’ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, that unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’” Jesus told Nicodemus , “Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” (verse 7).

Some think our new birth is some miraculous change, accomplished by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. They suggest we are so spiritually depraved that we cannot make any choice on our own to believe or to follow Jesus; but this ignores how God causes this change in our lives. Romans 10:17 reminds us, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” Paul said , “For I’m not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). Our new birth comes when we hear the words of the gospel and believe it. It is the gospel, not some direct operation of the Holy Spirit, which leads us to faith and to salvation.

First Peter 1:22-23 explains, “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring Word of God.” Peter notes that this is the Word of God that was “preached to you” (verse 25).

Romans 6:16-18 also reveals a change that takes place when people obey the message of God. These verses say: “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, that you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became the slaves of righteousness.” Clearly, the change took place when they obeyed a form or pattern of teaching. This pattern meant that they accurately obeyed that teaching of the gospel. These servants of sin were not so depraved they couldn’t understand and obey the teaching. This obedience resulted in God freeing them from sin and making them servants of righteousness. What did they do?

That change in them was explained earlier in this same chapter. Romans 6:3-7 says, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? And 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 be also 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 has died is freed from sin.”

When we are baptized into Christ’s death, God causes us to be crucified with Him, to be buried with Him, and raised up with Him so that we can walk in newness of life. Just as God raised up Jesus to have a new life, God gives us that new birth, that new life free from sin. And we must die to an old life of sin before we can be born again. We die to sin when we repent and are crucified with Christ in baptism.

Titus 3:4-7 reminds us that our salvation is God’s work on us. Paul wrote, “But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, [He does it] by the washing of regeneration and the renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal

life.” Out of love, God saves us. He does it through the washing that regenerates us, or baptism. God causes us to be born again when we listen to His Word and we obey it. We should praise God for this new life!

Second, our new birth in Christ leads us to have a living hope! (1 Peter 1:3). Our hope is not in our works of righteousness but in God’s mercy and grace. Because the Father raised Jesus from the dead we can have a living hope that one day we too will rise from the grave. In Christ we have eternal life! John 20:30-31 says, “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” The recorded words found in Scripture lead us to believe in Jesus, and our faith leads us to life in His name. This life is abundant and this life is eternal. John later wrote, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

The living hope of eternal life is assured to be real because God raised Jesus up from the dead. Jesus “was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). His resurrection matters. First Corinthians 6:14 says, “Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.” Our hope lies in God’s power to raise us up, just as He did Jesus. We should praise God for this living hope!

This matters greatly. First Corinthians 15:16-17 says, “For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is worthless; you’re still in your sins.” He notes in verse 19, “If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.” Because God did raise up the Lord Jesus, we have a living hope in the power of God to raise us up. This living hope reminds us that Jesus is coming again. Paul spoke of on Mars Hill, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

If we’re not born again, if we’ve not repented, we’ll face condemnation; but if we have repented and were baptized, that is born again, we have a newness of life that leads to eternal life and an eternal inheritance when we are resurrected. The Lord Jesus promised, “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, and those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29). Yes, we will face life or judgment depending on our faith and our deeds.

Third, since Christians have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead we can “obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3-4). We’ll inherit a home in heaven, because of the grace of God. God’s grace and kindness does not end in this life; it will last forever and ever. I love Ephesians 2:4-7: which says, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you’ve been saved), and He raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.”

God’s kindness in the heavenly places will exceed even the grace in kindness which we know here and now. Our inheritance in heaven is imperishable; nothing can ever destroy it. Our inheritance in

heaven is undefiled; nothing can ruin it physically or morally. Neither moth nor rust can destroy your treasures in heaven. There will be no sin, no crime, and no war in heaven. Our inheritance will never fade away. The blessings of God will never bore us or grow dull and wearisome. God's glory and beauty will last forever and ever. More than that, God has reserved that inheritance for you personally; it has your name on it. If you are God's child, you will inherit God's blessing and care. God will also protect you, getting you ready for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time. The Lord Jesus right now is interceding, mediating, and advocating with the Father for every Christian, so that we may continue to stand right with God.

Why does this matter? When you take notice of all the things that God has done, all that He is doing and all that He will do for us in Christ, you can then appreciate the surpassing riches of the kindness and grace of God. His grace humbles us, and makes us want to praise and serve Him, with all of our hearts. It makes us want to leave that old life of sin and to be born again. God's kindness leads us to repent of our sins (Romans 2:4). God's kindness makes us want to be better people and to lead others to grow close to God. When you know the love of God, you want everyone that you love to know God's love too! We serve and praise the God of love, and we're thankful. I hope you're praising and blessing God in your life.

If God the Father and the Lord Jesus are blessed and worthy to receive glory and honor and power, then how are you reacting to Him? Do you praise and thank Him? Do you worship Him regularly? Has the kindness of God made any difference in your attitudes or your behavior? Are you willing to be born again, so that you might become a child of God, free from sin? Are you ready for the salvation God is making ready to be revealed at the last time?

Every day brings you one day closer to the second coming of the Lord. The Lord will raise you up from the grave. You will either have a resurrection to eternal life or a resurrection of judgment, and whether you stand in the grace of God or not will determine your eternal destiny. Are you ready to meet Him? When He comes, will you have great joy in your heart or will you be afraid? Do you dread the Day of Judgment? God has prepared for you; are you prepared?

To be right with God the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again!" (John 3:7). "Must" means "must." You too "must" be born of water and the Spirit, and that means demonstrating your faith and love by repenting of your sins and being baptized into Christ Jesus, that is immersed in water, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. After you're born again you must take up your cross daily and follow Jesus from now on. It means praising the Lord and walking in righteousness, attending worship, and serving others. It means treating others kindly and helping other people. It means being devoted to the Lord!

Where Could I Go?

When life falls apart and you have to pick up the pieces, where do you go? Today, we're exploring our need to turn to the Lord. The apostle Paul wrote, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the LORD, or who became his counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:33-36). Since God's wisdom and knowledge is far deeper than our own, we'd be wise to listen to Him and go to Him.

I suspect that all of us at some time have fallen prey to a scam, listened to a false report, or believed a lie because we trusted the wrong person. You might think this isn't important, but the Lord Jesus said that the devil "is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Paul remarked that "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). Trusting in the devil's lies will cost you your soul.

Some years back my friend had a sin problem that led his soul to be troubled. Where could he go? Another friend worried greatly about his salvation, worrying whether not he was old enough to know what he was doing when he became a Christian. There was a husband who was having trouble getting along with his wife. There was an abused woman who wondered how she could forgive her abuser. Then there's a guilty sinner who wondered how he could forgive himself. A Christian facing a great dilemma was looking for a solution that didn't involve sin. Where could they go to find the answers to their spiritual needs?

Our reading today comes from The Gospel of John 6:66-69. Jesus had worked several miracles, He fed the multitudes, and done many wonderful things, in fact the people thought about making Him king. But whenever He said some things they didn't understand and some things they didn't like, they decided to pack up and leave.

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" And Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

We need to come to that same conclusion, to believe in Jesus and realize that He's the Christ, the Holy one of God.

When people face a serious problem and become desperate they often reach out to any solution they think will work. Sadly, people have many devices and sometimes think they can find answers on their own. Solomon wrote, "Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they've sought out many devices" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). People put their trust sometimes in the things that are human. Some love the wrong things more than they love the wisdom of God and find all their pursuits worthless.

The book of Ecclesiastes speaks of Solomon's pursuits to find satisfaction in life. He explored human wisdom, pleasure, possessions, entertainment, wives and concubines, madness and folly. He said, "All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. And thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11). Later he noted, "So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind" (verse 17).

Perhaps you've felt like Solomon. Life didn't provide for you the satisfaction that you wanted. You consider your achievements and wonder what advantage did they bring. You look inside your heart and soul and find emptiness, futility, and a striving after wind. You may wonder what can you do, where can you go to find contentment. If you let your passions rule your life, you'll never achieve enough or get enough.

I've heard people say, "You know if I had lots of money, I could be happy"; but you probably wouldn't. Some think, "If I had.... (and you fill in the blank), I could be content"; but you probably wouldn't. Some think if they could fulfill their dreams, they'd be happy; but those who seem to be the most successful often are the most miserable. Success, money, and fame often bring great misery and problems. There are things money cannot buy. Money cannot buy love, cannot buy time, cannot buy peace, cannot buy forgiveness, cannot buy manners, cannot buy true friends, and cannot buy God's grace (which is a gift).

Ecclesiastes 5:10-12 says, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity. When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what's the advantage to their owners except to look on? The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much; but the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep." Many people have an abundance, but not contentment.

When a man came to Him and asked Jesus to divide his inheritance with his brother, the Lord Jesus said, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I'll tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, but is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:16 to 21).

Abundant life, true contentment, can be yours when you become rich toward God rather than becoming rich only with the temporary things of this world! You don't know when the God of heaven may say to you, "This very night your soul is required of you." All the things you thought were important, all the things you've accumulated, all the success you've achieved, all the money in your bank account won't mean as much as whether your soul was right with the living God. The Lord Jesus said, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

The apostle Paul found his contentment in Jesus Christ. He said, "for I've learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I've learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:11-13). The apostle Paul had enough of God in his heart that his circumstances could not ruin his happiness and contentment. Proverbs 3:5-8 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body, And refreshment to your bones." You may regret many things in your life, but you'll never regret following the Lord Jesus with all your heart. Many people are miserable because they sometimes follow the Lord and then sometimes follow the world. They seem like Solomon to try everything but fully give themselves to God, they want everything else but not Him,

and they want to find joy, they want to find contentment, but they end up being disappointed and saying, “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.”

Psalm 118:8 says, “It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.” Some people think the popular advice “oh, follow your heart” is the best way, people will tell you that, but they realize that their hearts may not lead them to what’s truly best. People can deceive themselves into believing what they want to believe. Their hearts may cause them to make horrible decisions that bring them a lot of misery. Jeremiah 17:9-10 quotes what God said, “That the heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.” If the Lord were listening to your justification and looking into your heart, would He be pleased, with what you’re thinking?

You’ve probably seen people spin the truth in order to justify their ways. “One time won’t hurt.” “I can quit anytime!” “No one’s perfect!” “Why, God is too good to condemn anyone.” “Love makes our sins okay.” I’m amazed how far people will go and contradict what God has declared! They think they can change things. They say sin really isn’t sin or sin isn’t any big deal. Our culture seems to think because they have turned God’s morality upside down, that God won’t mind and will still bless them.

Psalm 50:16-21 says, “But to the wicked God says, ‘What right have you to tell of My statutes, And to take My covenant in your mouth? For you hate discipline, And you cast My words behind your back. When you see a thief, you’re pleased with him, And you associate with adulterers. You let your mouth loose in evil, And your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son. These things you have done and I kept silence; you thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes.’” God isn’t naïve or blind. “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3). We can’t hide from God or presume that God doesn’t care or notice.

The rebellious spirit of this generation isn’t new; we can’t ignore biblical history. Other generations thought they could set God’s ways and God’s morals aside and do as they please. They thought they could get away with changing God’s laws and God’s morals and make their own rules. Our culture thinks we’re no longer accountable to God. They presume they can make their own rules, and God won’t care. They will one day have a rude awakening. Folks talk about being “woke”; but the real awakening will come when we all stand before Jesus Christ on Judgment Day! Isaiah 5:20 says, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And clever in their own sight!”

Wouldn’t you hate to hear your Creator and Judge pronounce a “woe” upon you? Wouldn’t you hate to hear Matthew 7:21-23 where the Lord said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven 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.’” If you seek the Lord’s blessing, then do the will of the Father rather than practice lawlessness. Ignoring and dismissing, or rewriting God’s laws, is lawlessness, and the kind of lawlessness that Jesus will never accept!

You don’t have to listen to popular thinking. You can find the contentment and joy that you’re looking for by following the Lord Jesus and doing the will of the Father. If you want to find life, Jesus came to give us an abundant life and eternal life. In Christ we have every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3). If you want to find true love, turn to the love of God. If you want the spiritual truth that matters to

your soul in eternity, turn to the word of God! Jesus is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; and no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6).

People search the world trying to “find themselves” and forget God made them. Revelation 4:11 says “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.” God created you to seek and find Him. Isaiah 55:6-9 says, “Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ declares the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.’”

Seeking the Lord matters. Throughout Scripture God distinguishes those who seek Him from those who go their own way. Psalm 119:118 says about God, “You spurn all who go astray from your statutes, for their cunning is in vain.” God’s ways are righteous and good; they lead to eternal life. The ways of the world will only lead you to confusion, chaos, and misery. Won’t you seek the Lord?

The Lord Jesus calls us, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). We need hearts that say, “Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart” (Psalm 119:33-34). We should follow the Lord’s teaching carefully and lovingly.

Love moves us to comply with God’s instructions. This means paying close attention and carefully obeying God’s Word. We must not only seek the Lord, we must fully commit ourselves to Him. Whatever He says, we believe. Whatever He instructs, we will do. Whatever example He sets, we’ll follow. The Lord Jesus is worthy of our trust and commitment. No one can bless you with eternal life but Jesus; there’s no place else to go.

The Lord Jesus did not leave us ignorant about His marvelous grace and the need to trust and to obey Him. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you will not argue with Him or correct Him. Faith and love will lead to repentance, giving up our sinful thoughts and behaviors. Faith and love will lead us to confess our faith in Jesus Christ. Faith and love will lead us to be baptized into Christ, immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins, just as Acts 2:38 teaches. Faith and love will lead us to remain faithful and committed to worshiping and serving for the rest of our lives. Will you believe and serve the Lord?

The Word Became Flesh

Jesus is the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word became flesh. The Lord Jesus became flesh and became the greatest blessing this world has ever known. We search through the Bible, because it has precious treasures on every page. It has the wisdom of God. God is sharing His heart with us through the Word. The Bible provides for us the greatest story of love ever written. God sent His Son Jesus into the world to bless our lives and to demonstrate His love. We know of this love because of the record we have of His life, death, burial, and resurrection in the Bible. So we go again and again to its pages.

The coming of Jesus into the world was an amazing event. The Bible predicts His birth in the 8th century BC in Bethlehem of Judah in Micah 5:2. His birth was marked with a special star that Wise Men followed for months from the East. His birth was marked with an angel announcing His birth to some shepherds and a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God, telling them they will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes.

God proclaimed through the prophet Isaiah, “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. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this” (Isaiah 9:6-7). Oh, it’s exciting to recall the blessing of Jesus in His coming into the world.

Our reading today comes from The Gospel According to John 1:1-5.

This time of year many people focus on the birth of Christ, but did you know that Jesus has always existed? In fact, there’s never been a time when Jesus did not exist. Jesus was no mere man. He was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Jesus was Divine and became flesh. He’s always existed and created all things, but He didn’t always have flesh.

John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” People are made up of both flesh and spirit, and the eternal spirit of the Lord Jesus took on flesh and revealed to us the glory of God in heaven. Jesus Christ, by becoming flesh, gave us two immeasurably valuable gifts essential to our lives: grace and truth. We have the grace that forgives us and the truth that sets us free! Oh, be grateful for the Word that became flesh.

In John 1:15-18, John the Baptist testified about Jesus, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” We know what God is like because we know Jesus. The Lord Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

The Hebrew writer also helps us to understand how the Father in heaven reveals Himself through the Lord Jesus. Hebrews 1:1-3 says, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed

heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

God, today, speaks to us through His Son; and Jesus His Son, who created the world and upholds all things by the word of His power, gives us an exact representation of the nature of God. The better we know Jesus Christ, the better we will know the Father in Heaven.

Jesus is the heir of all things. John 3:35 says, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.” The Lord Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me” (Matthew 28:18). The Lord Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He upholds your existence and mine. He controls everything that exists. Colossians 1:15-17 says, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

Sometimes people hear the words “firstborn of all creation” and assume that Jesus was the first created being. However, if all things were created by Him and for Him, He cannot be a created being. The word “firstborn,” here is misunderstood. The title “firstborn” here is speaking not of chronology but of preeminence. It’s not that Jesus is the first created person, but that He has a place of authority over all creation. He has a superior status over creation and his existence is prior to creation. He was in the beginning and has always existed, and now God has given Him authority over all creation. Jesus prayed to His Father, “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, and the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5). Jesus was not created; He always existed. Jesus existed before the world began, why then would He become a man? Why would a Divine Jesus become flesh? There are some very good reasons.

First, Jesus became a man to save us from our sins. An angel of the Lord told Joseph, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21). John the Baptist described Jesus as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). Jesus had to take on flesh in order to be a sacrifice for your sins and mine.

Hebrews 10:4-7 says, “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when He [that is, Jesus] comes into the world, He says, ‘Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure. And then I said, “behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of Me) to do your will, O God.”’ Jesus had to take on flesh, so that He could give His body as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus was born to die. First Peter 2:24 says, “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.”

Second, Jesus took on flesh so that we might learn humility and obedience. The Bible says “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-

servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:5-8). Jesus became human in order to die on the cross. Though Jesus existed in the form of God, He had to empty Himself, to make Himself nothing.

He left Heaven’s glory out of love to bless humanity. “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 through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus thought nothing of Himself so that He could bless you and me with eternal life. I can’t imagine all the glory and majesty of heaven, but Jesus left it all to be born in a stable. He endured all the hardships of mankind. He never knew the joy of a family, never owned a house, never had a hot shower, and did not grow old. He became poor so you and I might have an imperishable, undefiled home in heaven.

Third, Jesus came into the world to bring us the truth. Jesus told Pontius Pilate, “For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37). Jesus embodies truth. He said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and no one comes to the Father but by Me” (John 14:6). If you wish to know the truth, listen to Jesus. If you wish to know right from wrong, listen to Jesus. God once spoke from heaven to Peter, James and John about Jesus. God said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” (Matthew 17:5). So we must pay close attention to everything the Lord Jesus says.

Carefully listening to Jesus brings a blessing. The Lord Jesus said, “I’ve come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness” (John 12:46). The Roman Empire in the days of Jesus was filled with confused pagans, who felt enslaved by morally corrupt gods that they invented. The Roman gods didn’t understand love. Pagans were cruel and oppressive, and had little appreciation for human life or freedom.

The Bible teaches the Gentile world, “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that’s in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness” (Ephesians 4:17-19). The Lord Jesus taught morality and lived righteously. He demonstrated by his life and his death on the cross what love and forgiveness truly are. Jesus is the Light in a dark world, true healing in a suffering society, and real comfort for a confused culture. God knew what we needed. What a blessing Jesus is to us!

The Lord Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). He gives us His grace, forgiving us of our sins. God gives us the right to be His children through Christ. John 1:11-13 says, “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

As God’s children we can pray to our Father in Heaven. God promises us, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to

God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). God our Father sets a guard around our minds and hearts to keep us in perfect peace in times of anxiety.

More than that, the Lord protects us in time of temptation. First Corinthians 10:13 says, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” God loves and watches over His children. And when we draw near God, He truly draws near us.

Jesus doesn’t bless us only in this life; He brings us eternal life. First John 5:11-12 says, “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; and he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.” Jesus has prepared a home for us in heaven so that we can live with Him and the Father, and we can live with them forever and ever. Why do we speak about this? Because Jesus’ coming into the world is no small matter. Our lives are richer and fuller because of the Son of God, and how He became flesh. Thank God, that He did!

While it’s wonderful to consider how the Word became flesh, we must do more than talk about it. We must make it personal. Jesus didn’t come to save the world from sin; He came to save each of us as individuals. Jesus became flesh so that each of us could come to know God, could have the forgiveness of sins, could enjoy the blessings of a relationship with God, and could have eternal life with God in Heaven forever.

What does that mean for you? Jesus was born so He could die for you. Jesus became flesh knowing from the beginning that He would be crucified. He willingly emptied and humbled Himself in order to bear a cross for you. Don’t think of this as trivial, because it wasn’t trivial to the Father or to Jesus Christ. No one has ever done more to bless your life than Jesus did on the cross. No one but Jesus could give you forgiveness or eternal life. Do you take the Lord seriously?

If you do, what have you done about it? Have you committed yourself to follow Jesus and His teaching? Have you placed your trust in Him and confessed Him as the Christ, the Son of God? Have you turned away from sin? Have you been baptized into Christ? According to Romans 6:3, being baptized into Christ means being baptized into His death. Jesus shed His blood in His death, so baptism into Christ puts us in contact with His blood that forgives us. Baptism is also the time when the Lord adds us to His church. We need to come to Christ, we need to be baptized, and to get involved in the church. I pray that our time together will encourage you to act.

Jesus is Coming Again

Many know about Jesus coming into the world in the first century. Did you know that Jesus is coming again? We're going to explore what the Bible says about the second coming. God gives us the answers that we need to the most serious questions about our souls, our future, and our need for salvation. He's given us His Word to help us understand His will and to prepare for the coming Judgment Day. The Lord Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4). If our lives and eternity depend on knowing God's Word, then we must study diligently.

Jesus promised, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1- 3). The Lord Jesus has gone to the Father to prepare a place for His disciples, but what's going to happen to those who don't know the Lord? Will He judge us? When is Jesus coming again?

Many strange ideas surround the second coming of Christ, but the Word of God can help us find what will actually happen. It's crucially important for us to know and to believe the truth about the second coming and what will happen to us. We don't want anyone to rely on a false hope. We don't want anyone to imagine they're saved only to hear the Lord say, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matthew 7:23).

Our reading today comes from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

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

The Lord coming for us, and taking us home with Him, is going to be a great comfort.

Peter said, "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.' For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:3-10). We can surely believe Jesus Christ will one day return to this earth and will judge us all.

Some doubt that Jesus will come again. They live as secular people never thinking about their souls or that they must give an account to God for their ways. Some deny that God exists. Some are mocking even today and questioning whether Jesus will ever come again. But when He arrives, no one will be scoffing. People mocked Jesus when He was on the cross, and people sneered at the idea that Jesus arose from the dead. But when the stone was rolled back and the grave clothes were lying by themselves, people marveled!

Whatever Jesus predicted always proved true. He predicted the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24; and in 70 AD Titus and the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem, fulfilling the prophecy to the last detail. Jesus also predicted the end time in Matthew 24:35-36, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." Jesus said He did not know when He would return—in fact, no one knows but the Father. Some people think they know, but Jesus said no one knows!

That's what Peter and Paul mean when they say that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night (2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:2). If Jesus, Peter and Paul said no one knows when it will happen we doubt those who think they do know. In every generation since the first century some have imagined they had figured out the day and the hour when Jesus would return. I remember years ago getting a book through the mail, "88 Reasons Why Jesus Is Coming in 1988." Those 88 reasons proved to be speculation!

I have another book in my library by a self-proclaimed prophet who said the end of the kingdoms of the world will take place in 1914. He had an elaborate scheme, but his prediction proved false. Jesus didn't return in 1914. No one knows when Jesus will come again; but we do know that when he comes everyone will know about it. The apostle John said in 96 AD, "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen" (Revelation 1:7). When Jesus comes again, you'll know it!

This passage in Revelation was written more than 60 years after the crucifixion of Jesus, but the soldiers who pierced him would see Him coming in the clouds. Likely those soldiers were already dead. John said even those who are in the tomb will rise from the dead to see Jesus at His return! Not only will people see Jesus when He comes again, they'll hear about it. Paul, "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

When He comes, the dead in Christ will rise first; but they won't be the only ones to rise on that day. The Lord Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, and those who committed evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). When Jesus comes again everyone from all time and all places will rise again!

Jesus said this resurrection of both the good and bad will happen in the same hour, when all will hear His voice. Once the resurrection takes place then we'll rise to meet the Lord in the air (as Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:17), and the faithful will be with Him always. Once men leave this earth "the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire" (2 Peter 3:7). Those who set their hopes on this life or this world need to know that this is not where they're going to spend eternity. The day that Jesus comes again we'll be taken from this earth to stand before the throne of Christ. We'll stand before His throne to be judged on that day.

Paul said, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). The Lord Jesus will judge each of us according to our deeds: how we lived, how we talked, how we treated other people, and how we were thinking. The Lord will reward His servants but will condemn those who did not live according to His will. The Bible teaches clearly that each of us will stand on his own before the Lord. No one will escape judgment. This is why it is so important for each one to consider how he or she is living before the Lord.

John describes the scene before the throne of God, “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds” (Revelation 20:11-12). The throne is white, because Jesus is righteous and will judge us righteously and fairly. He knows our hearts and He knows our lives.

He will judge us from the things written in the books. Of course, those books refer to things that are written in the Bible itself. Yes, there’s another book, the book of life, but the things that are His laws are what’s going to judge us in the last day. There is a higher court than the ones here on earth. There is an eternal court, which at the end of time will be in session to judge all people of all places of all time. That court of the Lord Jesus is the final court which will settle your destiny forever. There is no appeal. If you’re found guilty, there is only one sentence. That sentence leads to the lake of fire. Those who enter that place will never leave. That’s the worst thing, the worst thing, the worst thing, that can ever happen to anyone. We must not ignore the warnings found in scripture.

Your eternal destiny and my eternal destiny will be determined by whether we have obeyed the Lord or have rejected Him. Jesus said, “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” (John 12:48). Many people treat the Lord’s teaching as if it were not important, as if it were trivial or optional. Jesus first came to us as a Savior; but when Jesus comes again He will come as a judge. We need His grace; otherwise we’ll receive personally the wages of sin, which is death (Romans 6:23)

Jesus Christ Himself said, “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left” (Matthew 25:31-33). Not everyone will be saved; many will be lost. Many people think surely the Lord is too good to condemn anyone, but the truth is that the Lord is too good not to condemn those who live evil lives and will not repent of their sins.

Jesus said about those who would not help others in need, “These [that is, the goats on his left] will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:46). When people lead selfish, immoral lifestyles and are not willing to change their ways, God with great sadness, leaves them to the way they have chosen. God doesn’t want to condemn anybody. Peter said, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God wants you to be saved, but you have to repent for yourself.

God has done everything He could to lead us to salvation and to eternal life. He sent Jesus to show us what godly living is. Jesus died for our sins on the cross to demonstrate God’s love for us and to cleanse us from all, all unrighteousness. The Holy Spirit inspired the apostles and prophets to give us

the Bible to teach us how to live and how to please God. Jesus purchased the church with His own blood so that we might have the strength of brothers and sisters in Christ. God can do all these things, but He won't twist your arm, He won't make you repent. You have to do that for yourself. You have to decide you're going to leave sin, and you're going to do what is right.

When a person lives in sin, he or she will dread the second coming of Jesus Christ; but when a person is right with the Lord, the second coming is the wonderful appearing of someone that we love and serve. Do you look forward to seeing Jesus come in the clouds? Peter said, "beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14).

Yes, you have to decide whether you want to be among the sheep or among the goats. You decide whether you'll obey the Lord or reject the words of Jesus. You'll decide whether you love God or love your sins. You'll decide whether you'll be part of His family, the church, or you'll run with the world. You know, there is no neutral ground, there's no third group. You can't serve two masters; friendship with the world is hostility with God (James 4:4). The grace of God is amazing, but there is no Biblical promise of salvation to those who will not repent of sin and those that will not obey the gospel. This is why I am praying that you prepare yourself for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

When He comes again, face the Lord prepared. The apostle Peter said, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar with the elements and it will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?" (2 Peter 3:10-11). If we're to be judged by the Word of God, doesn't it make sense for us to follow the will of the Lord and please Him?

Are you close to God? Are you reading your Bible? Are you worshiping at church regularly? When was the last time you prayed to God? How do you treat your neighbor? Do you forgive others or do you take revenge? Are you right with God?

Obey the gospel by believing Jesus is the Christ, repent of every sin and decide to do God's will in everything, confess the name of Jesus before others, and be baptized (that is, immersed in water) in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. That was God's answer to what we must do to be saved on the day of Pentecost according to Acts 2:38, it's God's answer today. When you're baptized, the Lord will add you to His family, the church; and you'll become an heir of heaven if you remain faithful to the Lord. I hope you won't wait another day, but that you'll obey the Lord. Don't risk losing your soul.