

## Getting to know your Bible – Part 4

*Getting To Know Your Bible*

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What a wonderful reminder of the very distinct difference between the fact of God's Word and the feelings that we may or may not possess and the faith that it requires to believe the Word of God over the feelings that we're exhibiting. Tonight, I would encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of 2 Peter chapter 1. Now 2 Peter chapter 1 may seem like an odd passage to begin with tonight in light of the fact that we're going to spend the entirety of this evening talking about a section in the Old Testament known as the prophets. But before we get to 2 Peter chapter 1, if this is your first time with us on Sunday evening in some time, whether in person or online, allow me to remind and refresh you kind of the scope and the sequence of our Sunday evening studies as of late. As you're well aware, we as a church body are emphasizing and encouraging each and every one of us at some level and some stage to place and to hide the Word of God in our hearts. Now I know typically we interact and we live life among those of like age and stage but one thing you may or may not be aware of is our preschool ministry is actually learning verses of scripture this year. They're learning a verse that coincides with each and every letter of the alphabet. Last time I checked that's 26 verses that our preschoolers are learning. Our kids ministry ages first through sixth grade are collectively memorizing the entirety of the gospel of John, and then of course anybody can participate irrespectively of their age, but as a collective whole we as a church body are ascribed to or challenging one another to take a single chapter of scripture, to kind of own it for the year, make it that which we spend our life and our time in, so that as a total body of believers we can have all 1,189 chapters memorized. Technically though it's 1,210. What we know as Psalm 119 has 22 respective chapters within and I was not going to ask anybody to memorize 176 verses. So that actually equals to 1,210. We're about 87% of the way there. That being said, there's just a little over 170 chapters, I believe, that are left. I know we'll get there soon. And then once that accomplishes, we will actually open up the portal for the second round because some of you have said, "Hey, I want a second chapter." Well, God bless you. You didn't pick Ezra chapter 2. I'm saying there.

But nonetheless in light of that on Sunday evenings, we are kind of taking that 30,000 foot view, what I've entitled it, "Getting to Know our Bible. We know the Bible consists of an Old Testament and a New Testament, within respect of each of those Testaments there are sections. In the Old Testament we have what's called the Torah or the law, the writings, and tonight we'll study the prophets. In the New Testament, we have the Gospels, we have the Pauline letters, and then what we know as the general epistles or the

general letters, and it's just a way for us to get familiar particularly with sections of the Bible that we may not be as familiar with. Now tonight we will close the Old Testament section. You're probably going to feel a little more comfortable beginning next week because most of us have a familiarity with the New Testament more so than we do the Old Testament, and tonight kind of to set up the prophets of kind of somewhat of a Meyersism for lack of better terms, the New Testament tells you and I what we are to believe. The Old Testament, it communicates to us what's about to happen. Most of the prophecies that we're going to deal with tonight regarding the Messiah and Messianic events have not been fulfilled. They are yet to be fulfilled one day. So if you want to know what's going to happen in the days ahead, yes, the New Testament tells you what to believe, but the Old Testament will give you the script, quote, in advance.

2 Peter, chapter 1 verse 20 and 21, it gives us an introduction to the prophets. Now the prophets begin in the book of Isaiah and end with Malachi in your Old Testament. It is a massive section of scripture as we'll address tonight, but I think this is an appropriate beginning. It says,

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Now two things I want to address there before we talk about the prophets in totality. The first one is this, you do not have the privilege of just taking a verse or a section of any prophecy in the Old Testament and making it say what you want it to say. It says it is of no private interpretation so, in other words, that which Jeremiah spoke of, oftentimes Isaiah did, and as we'll see tonight many of these prophets, they lived, they coexisted with one another. They interacted with one another. They were able to be quote checked and balanced with each other. But most importantly, they did not write what they wrote because that's how they felt. They didn't write what they wrote because it was their personal agenda or their personal opinion. According to what we just read, they wrote what they wrote simply because God said, "Put this down." And that's important. We're dealing with a section of the scripture that is so forth-telling and, quote, predictive that lest it be written by the hand of God himself, we would find ourselves in a horrible, horrible scenario.

So as a brief description, when we talk about Isaiah through Malachi, that huge section toward the end of your Old Testament, there are really two main aspects of this section. The first one is this, it's what we call forth-telling. Now the other one is foretelling. Forth-telling is speaking the truth in light of a time where most people don't want to hear it. In other words, when you read the prophets of the Old Testament, majority of their writings do not come at a time where the Jewish people and the Israelites were living in favor of and on fire for the Lord. In fact, it's much the opposite. In fact, the general theme from a personal perspective of the prophets is you are living wrong, you better start living right or you're going to be judged by God. That's a quick summary. And so to quote forth-tell is to say "Thus saith the Lord." In fact, that is a statement that you will see over and over

and over again in the prophets that in light of what you think, in light of what you feel, this is what God says.

The second aspect is what we know as foretelling. Now, this is what most people think of when they think of the prophets and one of the fascinating things, particularly about the Jeremiah's and the Ezekiel's of the Old Testament, is we think so much about the foretelling we somewhat forget the context in which it was communicated. God only communicated these things because they were in rebellion but by foretelling here's what he was saying, "In light of your rebellion, in light of your lack of repentance, if things do not change this is going to occur." Now in the foretelling, there are two aspects, there is a present day realization and there is a coming day prophetic element. In other words, here's what I mean by that, that when Jeremiah spoke to the Jewish people if they do not repent they will go into captivity, in the present day, it meant Babylon is coming but in the prophetic sense, it was speaking to more than Nebuchadnezzar coming and taking the city to the ground, it was speaking, there's coming a day where God himself is going to show up and take it all to the ground. So there's a both/and there.

I think one of the struggles we have is sometimes we want to make the prophets so much about the second coming we forget that there was a present-day application, and sometimes I think we focus so much on what was happening in their current situation we forget there's a quote prophetic element to it. But we must address the predictive element. How do we deal with these prophecies that were spoken of old, obviously of no private interpretation, given by the Holy Spirit? What I want to deal with tonight is an important aspect, it's what I call the accuracy and the validity of these prophetic statements. Now remember, for every prophecy that you have in the Old Testament about the first coming of Jesus, there are eight regarding the second coming. In other words, for everything that we know that took place in his birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection, there are eight statements about what is not, yet to come.

Now, let me address just some important elements of this predictive concept. The first one is this, in order for something to truly be a prophetic statement, it must have been made known prior to its fulfillment. That's obvious, right? But allow me to share with you some historical, I guess, validation for this. If you've ever seen, heard of, or had the privilege of going to what we call the Holy Land, the land of Israel, there is on today's tour stops a place that almost every group goes. I've been there numerous times. It's called Qumran. It's basically a desert within the desert. It's just this side of nowhere, to be quite honest with you. It is absolutely desolate. It was an area that thousands of years ago, there was a group of people who were just a little bit different, shall we say. They were a part of the Essenes. The Essenes was a group of individuals that technically we would label as a set, s-e-c-t. They had somewhat of a belief system that was somewhat Judaistic, somewhat Christian, but really neither of either and it really kind of formed its own, I wouldn't say cult, but more cultish behavior.

Well, about 80 years ago, there was a young man, and I know this is shocking to all of you guys here who were teenage men at one time, there was a young man who'd been put on an assignment by his dad to do something and he didn't want to do what he'd been

called to do. So rather than do what he was supposed to do, he decided to play around, mess around, and he started throwing rocks in caves and in doing so, he heard a crash. He investigated that crash, and what he discovered may be the greatest discovery of the last 100 years. It's called the Dead Sea Scrolls. And we've heard of that. I mean, let's be honest, it's something that we're kind of all familiar with, but at the end of the day, most of us have no clue why it's actually important. The reason the Dead Sea Scrolls are so vital, particularly tonight's study, is this, that they date about 100 BC. So 100 years before what we know as the Christmas story, 100 years before the church.

Now the reason that's important is the Dead Sea Scrolls, now they contain some crazy writings, trust me, but within those jars of clay that they discovered, there was a perfectly preserved copy of the Old Testament. That's right. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel Micah, Hosea. Go through the list. Now the reason this is important is because these are the sections of your Bible that told us about Jesus. It was Micah that said he'd be born in Bethlehem. It is Zechariah that talks about the second coming and Mount Zion. It is Isaiah that said he would be conceived of a virgin of the Holy Ghost. All these passages that talk about how Jesus would come, who he would be, what he would accomplish, were contained in books of the Bible and can I just bridge from this morning, that for thousands of years a whole lot of people said there is no way those were written in advance, they had to have been written after the fact. Because did you know the statistical odds of one person, specifically Jesus Christ, fulfilling all of those prophecies as written in advance is 1 times 10 to the 157<sup>th</sup>. Let me tell you how big a number that is. You may write quickly, but right now, if you were to write out that number, you might not finish writing it before I'm finished with this message. That's a lot of zeros.

Now that being said, you understand why people were skeptical and they doubted and they questioned. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, you know what, we discovered this very first point, those prophecies had to have been written at least 100 years before Jesus ever showed up which meant there is no way that he was a self-fulfilled prophet. This is an element of prophecy that is so critical because today we live in a world with a lot of people that claim to be quote prophets. Now they may not claim the title of prophet, but I can tell you who they are, they're the individuals that are on your TV screen telling you what's about to happen. Okay? They claim that they know what the future holds. They claim they know what is about to happen. Here's the reality, they cannot be a prophet, number one, because it has to be known well in advance of the fulfillment. Number two, it must be beyond all human foresight. If I were to tell you tonight who I believe will win the Super Bowl in two weeks, that's not a prophecy because there will be two teams that play, and there's a chance that either one could win. Right? But when you talk about all human foresight, let me reiterate what Isaiah told us in chapter 7, the Messiah would be conceived and born of a virgin. Can we all agree that is beyond all human foresight and comprehension?

Thirdly, it must give details. Now, this is where the Bible separates itself from all of the secular prophecies of the Nostradamus's and such that we see in the tabloids. If you read those prophecies of these, quote, secular entities, oh, they're so vague. They basically say, "In several decades, there will be a horrific storm that tears up a big city." Well, of course

there will be. But if you go to Zechariah chapter 14, it says there's gonna be a day where the Messiah Jesus Christ will land on Mount Zion and the hill will split in half. Do you see the specifics there? Do you see the details that are involved? And currently to today, we're at least 2,500 years removed. That is beyond all human foresight, and it obviously possesses details.

Fourthly, a sufficient time must elapse between its publication and fulfillment to exclude the prophet or any interested party from fulfilling it. We've already alluded to the Dead Sea Scrolls, but here's how I would illustrate that. What if tonight, I told you in the year 2253, in the town of Mouchette, there will be an F5 tornado that will kill over 10,000 people. Now, number one, I don't plan on being here in the year 22, whatever year I used, okay? Number two, I purposely used the town of Mouchette because it doesn't exist yet and I've never heard of it. I just made it up. And I gave you a number of how many people. Now do you see the difference there? There is a time span. There are details that could not be known. And there is no way I can fulfill it.

Finally, there must be a clear and evident fulfillment of prophecy. This is going to transition us to this concept of what we know as the first coming versus the second coming, and the prophecies. Remember, when Micah told us the Messiah was going to be born, he did not say he would be born in the Middle East. Remember what he said? Bethlehem, the city of David. And when you look back at the Christmas story, the life, the ministry of Jesus Christ, every one of those prophecies was fulfilled exactly as it was spoken. And one of the things that just, and I know I sound aged when I say this, one of the things that is just fingernails on a chalkboard, we don't have chalkboards anymore, but nonetheless, fingernails on a chalkboard to me, because I can still remember that just stomach churning sound, is when somebody, podcast, commentary, reads some passage in the book of Ezekiel or Jeremiah or Micah and Nahum or even the book of Revelation and goes, "Aha, what's written there really means what's happening today." In other words, no, if it really meant what's happening today, it would look and sound like exactly what is happening today. We don't have to make it say something because last time I checked, there was a virgin that gave birth in Bethlehem and a young family that went to Egypt and returned to Nazareth exactly as the prophets hundreds of years previously had spoken.

The example I want to give to you now if time was without end, we would go in and really dig into these passages, Joel chapter 2 verse 28 is a very critical Old Testament passage that says that there's going to come a day in the future where our old men will dream dreams, our young men will have visions. It says that the moon will turn the color of blood and the sun will go dark. The great and terrible day, Lord. It's a very eschatological second coming passage. The struggle with this, and this is why I want to address this, is in Acts chapter 2, verses 16 and 17, when Peter's preaching the Pentecostal message, he actually quotes this passage. Now, it's caused a lot of distress in people's lives. Okay? It's caused a lot of discussion, a lot of debate, but allow me to share with you what is happening. When you look at Pentecost, now it was a supernatural experience, but it did not look like Joel chapter 2. There is no record in Acts chapter 2 of the moon ever going red or the sun ever going dark. There's no record, right? So it wasn't

fulfilled exactly as it was written. I want you to hear what Peter says in Acts chapter 2. And again, this is one of those passages that we oftentimes, we misinterpret, we mess up. I want you to hear what he says. You ready? He's gathered the audience. Remember they've told him, "Oh, we think these people are drunk," because they're hearing their own language when somebody else is speaking another one, and here's what he says. He says, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Now, what do most of us do? We go to that passage and we go, "Oh, ha, Joel's being fulfilled." The problem is Joel wasn't fulfilled because it didn't look like what Joel said. You say, "Well, how do we work all that out?" Because this is that is not that is this.

Allow me to explain. When Peter got up, he used the phrase, "This is that." You realize that the, quote, tongue experience had already occurred. If he had been referring to the tongues, he would have said, "That is this." He said, "This is that." Let me tell you what Peter was doing and 99.9% of us, we miss it. Here's what Peter was doing there. He basically was saying every single prophecy regarding the first coming has already happened. You know what's next? The second coming. And when he said, "This is that," he was not interpreting Pentecost in light of Joel, he basically was preaching a message that we better get our lives straight because the next big thing that's going to happen is Jesus is coming back. And so the reason I use that example is a lot of times we read Acts chapter 2 and we see this statement and allusion by Peter and we go, "Oh," but here's the problem: none of it matches and they all matched at the first coming, so most assuredly they would match at the second coming.

So what's the theological framework? This comes more into the forth-telling than the foretelling. The underlying theme between all of the prophets, whether major or minor, we'll discuss that in a moment, is repentance. It is a call to repent and to turn from one's sin and turn to the one true God. It's God's desire for his people to live holy, unblemished, sinless lives. I think kind of a critical injunction here is this: nowhere do you read in the prophets God's desire to destroy. In other words, don't picture him as Zeus with a lightning rod wanting to destroy you. What you see in the prophets is a holy God desiring his people to, quote, get it right so that he can favor them going forward.

Now, let me speak to this as a parental figure, as one who has and is continuing to parent. Now, you may parent differently than I do but there are times, and by the way, I got this wisdom from somebody more aged than I. Don't go looking for it. As a parent, if you go looking for it, you're going to find it, and if you find it, then you've got to deal with it. But that being said, if it happens to arise, maybe you hear of something, maybe you get wind of something, maybe you see something. I don't know how you parent, but can I tell you how I parent? I've heard the information. I may have read the information, and here is my prayer, "Please, please don't let it be true. Please don't let it be true. I don't want to have to deal with this." Now, maybe I'm just a scaredy cat of a parent, okay? But I really don't want to. I think, though, that's important to hear. There is not a tone in the prophets of God that said, "Oh, I can't wait to judge them." No, it's much the opposite. His tone is, "Please repent. Please burn down the high places. Get rid of the false idols. I don't want to discipline you and punish you. I want to favor you." But what did the people do? Oh man, they began to pout. "God's, boy, his rules, his regulations, they're just, they're too

much, they're too burdensome for us." And so thus, the consequences that were prophesied.

At the heart of these writings was the concern of the prophets, I want you to hear this, for quote, mixed living between the Israelites and the pagan people. Now, I've put on the outline a big double asterisk here. I want to address a contemporary problem that has arisen. I want to just read this statement: the prophets should not be seen as racist in nature. Push pause there for just a moment. If you'll read through the prophets, it is made abundantly clear that if you're one of the twelve tribes, if you're of Judah, if you're of all these groups, they were explicitly told not to intermarry, not to interact, and to stay away from. It's pretty clear. Okay now that being said but preventative for the sake of holiness and purity, God's call for Israel to exclude themselves from others was not based upon color or creed but rather the pagan and idolatrous behavior and worship of these other people. And I put there in parenthesis, I think the pattern that you see within the prophets in the totality of scripture, that one's faith is of the utmost importance, one's family is of secondary, and the future is of the third, and when you see God come down hard on the Israelites because they have quote intermarried, hear me clearly, it's not because he despised the color of their skin, it's because he despised the idolatrous pagan practices that they would bring into the country.

This was Solomon's problem by the way. You realize that Song of Solomon, the last of the writings, we talked about that last week, that's really a song and a ballad of his young and first love. All these other women that he brought in, you know, the biggest issue? The biggest issues they brought the idols, they brought the worship, they brought all the false teachings. By the way, I know we addressed it a little bit this morning but lest you don't see this the way the prophets are actually written, David, King David, had a child by the name of Solomon with a woman by the name of Bathsheba who was a Hittite. You know the Hittites come from Africa. There was a distinction in color, but there wasn't a difference in faith and belief. Kind of a very important observation there.

So when we come to the prophets, the thing you'll see at the bottom of that first page is that we classify them as major prophets and minor prophets. Now I know most of you are familiar with this, but the term major and minor has nothing to do with quality. It has everything to do with quantity. Isaiah is long. It's 66 chapters. Jeremiah is 52. I mean, these are incredibly lengthy books of the Bible. But then we go to the minor prophets. Hosea is somewhat lengthy. Obadiah, one chapter. Jonah, four chapters. Habakkuk, three. Haggai, two. You see the difference? And so when we classify them as major and minor, don't think the quality of their message, simply think the quantity of their message.

On the back of your physical outline or on the screen, I want to deal real quickly as we close with the chronological order. This is the most difficult part of the, or most difficult, but also the most beneficial and fruitful. When it comes to the messages of the prophets, whether they be classified as major or minor, we classify them into three groups. There is pre-exilic, exilic, post-exilic. Now, when we use the term exilic, exile, that is that 70 years in Babylon that the Israelites spent that the Lord told them they were going to go, and yet Jeremiah told them they'd also return 70 years later. So all of the prophecies

involve either A, if you don't repent you're going, B, you're in the mess, repent before you get released, or C, don't do this again. That's the prophets, right?

Now, as we classify those prophets in those three categories, one of the things that you'll notice that in the pre-exilic prophecies, there are three distinct audiences. The first one, Jonah, is to Nineveh. You realize that Jonah is actually the only prophet in the Old Testament whose audience was Gentile in nature and yet his audience is the only one that actually heeded the words. Now if you go in the book of Jonah, I know it's a fascinating book and it's a mesmerizing book, but when Jonah finally was spit out of the whale, when he finally decided to do what God told him to do, the Bible tells us that Nineveh was so large it took three days to walk across it. But you realize in chapter three of the book of Jonah, the Ninevites started to repent on day one. In other words, they didn't need multiple prophets. They didn't need multiple signs. All they heard was, we're gonna end up looking like this guy does if we don't change. Do you know what the book of Jonah says? It says that they tore their clothes, they put sackcloth, they put ashes on their heads and even the animals. Now think about that for a moment. Can you imagine, now some of you would love to do this, imagine bringing your dog to church and going to the altar to pray. Basically what they were saying is we want to make sure that sin has no place here. We're gonna even put it on the cows just in case. I find it fascinating that the only Gentile audience that the prophets spoke to actually repented of their sins.

There's the ten northern tribes, there are the two southern tribes, what we know as the exile. 722 BC is when the northern tribe was taken by the Assyrians. 586 when the southern tribes were taken by Babylon. Why is this so critical for our study? I want you to imagine per your outline that you are listening to Isaiah, you're listening to Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, or Jeremiah. Those are the pre-exilic prophets to Judah. Not only had they witnessed what happened in Nineveh, they also witnessed what happened to the northern kingdoms. They saw God tell them, "If you don't repent you're going into captivity," and they saw it happen before their very eyes. Let me share with you and I know it's the southernness in me so just put up with it, this this is what's happening to Judah pre-exilic, basically, you got a group of people saying, "Hey guys, watch this." In other words, "I know all these guys have fallen by the wayside. We got this. We got it." In other words, they believed their feelings more than the facts that God was presenting. That was a bridge to the world you and I are living in today.

And now we have the exilic prophets. Ezekiel and Daniel actually were in the exile. They were in Babylon. They were in the midst of all this when they wrote the incredible prophecies that God gave them. Ezekiel, by the way, incredibly, shall we just say, out there for lack of better terms, not only speaking of the return to, but the building of temples. And Daniel probably the book of the Old Testament that correlates with the book of Revelation better than any other one because it's not about going into exile, it's about the Lord's return one day.

And then we have what we know as post-exilic. We have Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi and what's interesting about those three is they're not speaking of the temple



that's going to be cleansed and rebuilt by Ezra and Nehemiah, they're actually speaking of the temple that Ezekiel talked about during the midst of the exile.

So what do we discover? The largest section of your Bible contains a message, a call to repentance and evidence of humanity's lack of willingness or desire to do so. As we close tonight, I want to actually call your attention to the last page of your Old Testament. It's the book of Malachi chapter 4, and I want to read for you the last chapter. Now before I read the last chapter, Malachi chapter 4, let me remind you of something. As soon as this chapter is penned, the Lord did what he said he would do, he was silent for four hundred and thirty years. It says, "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But," don't you love that word in the Bible? Basically, the first verse says, God said judgment's coming but, "unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Now the reason I wanted to read that, it is pretty providential that Moses is mentioned, Elijah is mentioned, and the Messiah is mentioned, and we see those three collectively throughout the New Testament operating together. But I wanted to focus on verse 6, the turning of the heart. Ladies and gentlemen, we could get into all the prophecies, we could get into the weeds, the details, the when, the how, the where, the what, get in all that, but if you really want to boil down this section of the Bible, all God really wants is our hearts to turn from sin unto him. Now don't get me wrong, I enjoy, I enjoy looking at the events, I enjoy the fulfillments and the speculation of how it might and when it might occur. Don't get me wrong. But at the end of the day, really the heart of the message is, he just wants our hearts to turn.

Last statement, I'll close. If you'll look at this outline of your prophets, I want you to notice which one is actually dated the oldest. I know all the dates are mixed up because of the pre and exilic stuff. You notice the oldest one on there is Obadiah. Obadiah, I believe, was the very first prophet. 25 verses, one page in your Bible. That's all it is. If Obadiah, and I believe he is, is the first prophet that we've got in the Old Testament, what is curious is what God said to Obadiah that he finished in Malachi. You know what he said in verse 4? The whole reason that he was calling them out was because of the pride of their heart. Now think about that. The only reason we have the prophets is because of the pride of our heart and the only purpose of the prophets is so that our heart will turn to the Lord. And so what I want you to hear tonight is there's a whole lot of details, there's a whole lot of things that are happening that we could get into and they're all intriguing and they're all interesting, but if you've got all that down pat and the pride of your heart hasn't been turned to the Lord, what does it matter? It matters none. Those men known as the

Pharisees that Jesus just, I mean, lit into on a regular basis, they had these guys memorized. The book of Daniel, Habakkuk, they probably knew it word for word. But where were their hearts? In the absolute wrong place. So tonight, may the call to us be this: no matter how much we memorize, no matter how much we're familiar with it, we know if our heart is not turned to the Lord, it doesn't matter.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Tonight as we close our service, though the prophets be great, grand and very much quantity filled, there's the call, the call for our hearts to be turned to the Lord. Maybe tonight you've never called on the Lord to save you. Maybe as Obadiah prophesied, the pride in your heart has been so welled up for so long you never thought you needed a Savior. You never thought you needed to be forgiven. Maybe you thought you could do it on your own. Maybe tonight's the night where you turn your heart to the Lord and you call upon Jesus to save you. Maybe tonight you say, "No, I've been a believer for years and for decades," but just because you're saved doesn't mean that pride can't well up. Just because you're saved doesn't mean your heart can't stray. And though in a moment I will pray and we will stand and sing and we will have a call to publicly render a decision, I would dare say most of us, tonight's really not about stepping out and stepping forward, for most of us tonight, not all of us, but for most of us, tonight is about departing from this physical place, understanding that it doesn't matter what our attendance looks like, it doesn't matter how much we know, it really doesn't matter how much we memorize, if our heart isn't turned to the Lord, it matters not.

*Lord Jesus, thank you, thank you that really at the end of the day, all you really want is our heart. Lord, we confess, it's our flesh, it's our culture, it's our upbringing. As you say in Colossians 2:8, it's the tradition of men that causes us to look on the outside but it's the Spirit of God that looks on the inside. God, I pray tonight we do a heart check and that we would make sure that our hearts is right with you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.*