

# OT Scripture and NT Epistles

*Building a Christian Mind*

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Well, we return to our series on how to know that Jesus is Lord and there's really no more important, crucial question that any living man, woman, or child could face in their own life and experience; to answer this question is to resolve the riddle of life, to ignore, evade, or not know the answer to this question is to miss the purpose of life and to be in danger of a great eternal judgment. Jesus is Lord, and that is the central testimony of Scripture. Jesus is Lord so much that he is the guardian of heaven itself. He said in John 14:6 that, "no one comes to the Father except through me." That is a claim of astonishing authority, a claim of astonishing exclusivity, and the question that a thinking person would ask is, how do I know this? How do I enter into a fullness of knowledge of this? And you know, if a claim like that is going to be made, it requires substantial support. It requires to claim authority over heaven and earth, as our Lord did, is a claim that cannot be made lightly. It's a claim that should be substantiated by evident authority and our Lord has done that, and we're in the process of examining all of the different ways that Scripture assure us that Jesus Christ is Lord. Knowing that Jesus Christ is Lord, therefore, verifies and vindicates all of the claims that he made about himself, including the fact of exclusivity and that there is no way to God apart from him. If you are here today and you're struggling with an understanding of how to be reconciled with God, this is the place to start. What we find and what we've looked at over the past three messages, I originally intended it to be one message, it's stretched into four, concluding today, what we find is that the writers of Scripture, going back to the time of Moses and forward through the apostles, the writers of Scripture laid a foundation under the leading of the Spirit of God that established a foundation, a foundation that laid the groundwork to know that Jesus Christ, and he alone, is Lord and King. It goes all the way back to the book of Genesis. It's established through all of the subsequent revelation, and that Scripture points us over and over again to its own testimony that Jesus Christ is Lord and King.

What I want to do here this morning is just do a little bit of a review of the prior messages and then conclude with a fireworks display, really, of how the New Testament apostles laid and rested on this claim of authority from prior Scripture, and so we're going to conclude this series today, this aspect of our series, with a message titled "Old Testament Scripture and the New Testament Epistles." Old Testament Scripture and the New Testament epistles. That's not a very colorful or exciting title, I suppose, but when you

see the significance of what's being said, it gives us so much more than what it would seem on a first glance.

Now at the beginning we considered prior Scripture in the book of Romans, the book of Romans being the most systematic declaration and explanation of biblical salvation, and in the book of Romans we see that the Apostle Paul says the gospel of God was promised beforehand in chapter 1, verse 2. The gospel is something that was testified by the law and the prophets, chapter 3, verse 21. And he says in chapter 15, verse 4, he says, whatever "was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." That's Romans 15:4 as we consider the way that Paul in the book of Romans relied on prior Scripture and pointed to the prophetic testimony to vindicate everything that he was saying about Jesus Christ and the gospels.

Now beloved, as you read what he says in that text in Romans 15:4, what I want you to see is that this is no incidental matter of theological or biblical trivia that we're talking about. Paul says "whatever was written in former days," it's a comprehensive look back at the Old Testament Scriptures and the ministry of the prophets. He looks back and he says all of that was written for our instruction, our instruction in the church age. God gave the Old Testament Scriptures and the ministry of the prophets over more than a thousand years to benefit us, to benefit us who have believed in Christ, and that in those Scriptures we find the truth, we find the guidance, we find the wisdom that leads us to salvation in Jesus Christ and Paul goes on to say that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now immediately when you hear those words "endurance" and "encouragement" and "hope," I have no hesitation in saying that those things are something that every one of you need. Life on earth is hard and relationships go sour and disappoint us. Our health fails us. Finances come and go, and we feel the weight of affliction and we feel the weight of loneliness and sorrow and we feel the weight of our sins. Sometimes we wonder whether God is really there or not. What does someone like that, struggling under the weight of life, what do they need except for something to help them endure? Something to help them be encouraged? Something that would give them hope and remind them of the goodness of God that they might persevere in their walk with Christ? Well, beloved, what we're looking at here, what we're considering, as Paul says, whatever was written in those former days is to that benefit for us. This is not something abstract and unrelated to daily life. This goes to the heart of Christian perseverance. This goes to the heart of enduring in the midst of days of affliction.

Have you ever thought about the Old Testament as being a book that does that for you? I can remember times far, far in the distant past, I remember telling somebody in a time of discouragement that the last thing I needed – this was so foolish, I utterly condemn and reject what I'm about to quote myself having said a few decades ago. I said the last thing I needed was to read about the Old Testament and the movement of Israeli army forces in their battles. That was such a foolish, ridiculous, unbelieving, proud, boastful statement as if I knew what I needed, as if God hadn't given his word to bless his people and to help them through their trials. I looked with such disdain at the Old Testament at that time in

my life. I didn't realize the treasure chest that it was. I didn't realize how everything that was precious about Christ, the foundation was laid in the Old Testament for that. That's what Paul is saying. The gospel of God was promised beforehand.

"Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope." Like me in those former days, you may not immediately know or see or understand how the Old Testament is so crucial to the foundation of what you believe, the foundation of Christian life. You may not immediately see or know it, but don't be like that idiot that I knew that I was some 30, 40 years ago and say foolish, sinful, proud, antagonistic things against the word of God. Instead, say, "Lord, I need your grace and help to understand this, to see these things." Come not as one who prescribes your own medicine for what your soul needs when it is weary and sick. Let, as it were, the Good Physician lay forth the remedy before you. It's difficult to find a Christian who is well-soaked in Scripture that doesn't somewhere have hope pulsating in his heart, somehow coming out of his mouth even in the times of affliction. A Christian soaked in Scripture is someone who is going to be manifesting the traits of endurance, encouragement, and hope. And if you're a Christian lacking those traits, maybe it's because you need a more thorough acquaintance with the word of God. I say it to help you, not to condemn you, but we need to start with where Scripture starts and Paul made that point exceedingly clearly in the book of Romans, the foundation that it lays for all of Christian life in the Old Testament.

Now, secondly, we looked at prior Scripture and the contemporaries of Christ. Prior Scripture and the contemporaries of Christ and we saw that Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, said this at the birth of his son. Zechariah, in Luke 1, said this as his tongue had been loosened to give praise to God and to mark the significance of the occasion that was happening in redemptive history before their very eyes and in his own flesh and blood, Zechariah said this, he said God "has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David," mark it, "as God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old." Zechariah, at the birth of John the Baptist, his own son, who would be the forerunner of Christ, Zechariah marked the occasion and tied it directly to the ministry of the prophets that had gone before. Centuries before, he's saying, "God had laid the foundation for this. God who knows the end from the beginning had said this was going to happen. The testimony has stood for centuries, and now here we are in the midst of it. He's raised up a horn of salvation for us, just as he promised to do." God made a promise, and he kept it.

We looked at John 1 when Philip spoke to Nathanael and said, "Nathanael, you've got to come see Christ. You've got to see this Jesus." And he said it in these words, he said, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." As Philip was introducing Nathanael and calling him to come meet the Messiah, he said, "Nathanael, everything that we've known from childhood about the coming Messiah, it's fulfilled in this person that you're about to meet." It's a stunning, when you realize the significance of it, it is a stunning moment in redemptive history. Imagine being in Nathanael's sandals at the time, being a lover of the word of God, looking for the hope of Israel, and a trusted friend comes to you and says,

"I've found him, the one of whom the prophets spoke. Come with me and you'll see for yourself." Stunning. There's a sense in which as we evangelize and share Christ with our contemporary friends today that we're doing the exact same thing, though we may not frame it in this language and they may not appreciate the significance of what we're saying, but when you bring Christ to someone by verbal testimony, by pointing them to Scriptures, what you are doing is nothing less than bringing the eternal Son of God to them who was testified by the prophets, by Moses in the law, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, and a great momentous acquaintance is being made and introduced based on biblical testimony.

You see, and by the way, beloved, I don't want to shock or offend anyone, at least not too much, but this is why, beloved, it's so important for us to realize the distinction between the gospel and your testimony of faith in Christ. Your testimony of faith in Christ is not the gospel. Your testimony of faith in Christ is not the power of God unto salvation. It's fine to share your testimony, I don't want to be misunderstood on that point, but the gospel is not about your experience, the gospel is about what God has done in Christ. The gospel is a declaration of what God has done by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to give his life a ransom for many to be raised from the dead that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life. And that is the gospel. It's what God has done in Christ, and that's what we need to be sure to get to the point of. Sometimes, as we share our testimonies, it's too easy to make us the hero of the story about what happened to me and my experiences. Well, beloved, you think about the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians. Paul had probably the greatest human experience of anybody before entering into heaven as a living man. Paul was captured up into the third heavens and saw things that men are not permitted to speak about and yet Paul did not make it a matter of talking about in Scripture, he wasn't talking about his experience of doing that. He actually rather marginalized it for the sake of making sure that the focus on Christ was never lost. That's what we need to do also. We need to put forth Christ, not simply our experience of him.

Philip said, "We found him of whom Moses and the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Beloved, remember, as you witness that we're putting forth Christ. Remember that it's not your testimony that creates faith in someone's heart. Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ and so we just need to have that distinction clear in our mind that even as we have opportunity to talk about our love for Christ, that's great, that's wonderful, don't misunderstand me, but especially when you're talking to someone who is not in Christ to get to the point and the point is not you or me, the point is the Christ of whom Moses and the prophets spoke.

Well, we've seen prior Scripture in the book of Romans, prior Scripture in the contemporaries of Christ. We've also seen in past messages prior Scripture in Christ himself. Prior Scripture in Christ himself, and here's what I mean by that, that Jesus repeatedly, as we saw in a single message over 60 some minutes, Jesus repeatedly in his message emphasized the importance of how he was fulfilling the law and prophets himself. He didn't simply present himself. He said, "I'm here in fulfillment of what prior Scripture said would take place."

So, for example, in Luke 24:44, Luke 24:44, Jesus said this after his resurrection. He said, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." There was there was such an abiding, necessary force of authority in what had been said by the Old Testament prophets and the Old Testament law and the Psalms, there was such a force, such a compulsion, such a necessity to them because they came from the throne of God himself, that all of those things had to be fulfilled. It was necessary. It was the will of God that those things be fulfilled in the life of Christ. As we read the gospels, we're not reading incidental matters of historical curiosity, of things that just happened to have happened to fulfill our curiosity about a man named Jesus. This was all, beloved, beloved, beloved, this was all operating, the life of Jesus was all unfolding according to a necessary compulsory blueprint that God had established before the foundation of the world and over the course of time had revealed bits and pieces through the ministry of the prophets until Christ came and it was all brought into full blazing light, and all of the details which seemed perhaps to be covered at times by shadows and not being entirely clear and difficult for those before Christ to put all of the pieces together, in Christ the plan of God was fulfilled, and he brought forth the fullness of everything that the Old Testament meant, not overturning the law, fulfilling it and rendering its ceremonial aspects unnecessary for further keeping. All of the sacrifices, the legal requirements of worship, all of the details and the repetition of those sacrifices over and over and over again, Christ comes and fulfills it all in one great and mighty life and one great and mighty act on the cross and thereby fulfilled everything that those countless sacrifices had been pointing forward to. And Jesus said it had to be this way. It had to be this way. And, beloved, it wasn't just individual details of his life that he was fulfilling, it was the whole system of sacrificial worship that was being fulfilled in his death on the cross. It had to be fulfilled. It had to be this way. This is what God had determined to happen.

Now fourthly, we looked at prior Scripture and apostolic preaching from the book of Acts, prior Scripture and apostolic preaching in the book of Acts, and this is what we looked at this past Tuesday, looked at a good half dozen passages. Again, just by way of summary and by briefest of reviews, what we see in the book of Acts is we see that the apostles, Peter and Paul and James and the first martyr Stephen, they were all leaning on the Old Testament as they preached and proclaimed the gospel to that generation. Peter said in Acts 3:18, "What God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled." What all the prophets said, all the prophets in one way or another were saying, "The Christ is going to suffer," Peter says, "It's now been fulfilled in contemporary history." It's a statement of incalculable consequence for Peter to say. But he laid out in the apostolic pattern was to remind people of what the prophets had said and then show forth the details of the actual life of Christ and say, "This is the fulfillment of what came before. There is a perfect symmetry between what God had been saying would happen and what has just now happened in Christ." So that the audience knew, or should have known, that Jesus was the Christ, that he was the Messiah, that he was the one that they were to look for. The Apostle Paul in Acts 26, as he gave testimony before King Agrippa in a trial of great pomp and circumstance, said, "I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass," Acts 26:23. Paul says, "I'm only telling you what the prophets and Moses would

say. I'm not saying anything new here. I'm just telling you it's been fulfilled in the person of Christ."

And so that's all review from where we've been. We see in the book of Romans the contemporaries of Christ, the words of Christ himself, the apostolic preaching as they went about as recorded for us in the book of Acts. It's all consistent, beloved. Now, here's the question for you and me. Here's the question for you and me: if we are to have a fully formed faith, if we are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, isn't it obvious that we need to know the Scriptures? And isn't it obvious that we need to know them better than what we do? And I include myself in that statement. We need to know these Scriptures better. This was the plan of God. He revealed it and the Lordship of Christ stands on that foundation.

Now, for new material for today, a fifth and final point for this approach. You could title it, prior Scripture and apostolic writing. Apostolic writing, prior Scripture and apostolic writing. When the apostles moved from preaching in an oral way to their audience, as recorded in the book of Acts, and then they began to write to churches to help them grow in grace, to correct problems, to instruct them in doctrine, what did they do and what did they say? Well, we've got a lot of Scriptures to go through here this morning and I want to acknowledge something to you up front, okay? I just want to be perfectly transparent with what we've done over these past three and a half messages. At some point, it starts to seem like we're just piling on, that we just keep saying, we just keep pointing to more and more and more things and going through all of the different manifestations of where this principle came forth. It seems like we're just piling on. And I admit that there was a time before I started all of this, where I thought, well, maybe just three or four references will be enough to make the point for you and then we can move on to other things. And, you know, in one sense, somebody could have done that but the loss – think about it this way, let's think about it this way, okay? In the scope of one year of time together at Truth Community Church, there's at least 104 messages, or let's just say in round numbers, 100 messages that are preached. Two a week for 50 weeks a year, you know, 100 messages a year. Don't we have time to just slow down and just kind of consider this and see the fullness of the significance? There's going to be time for other messages in the future but to have this point of the significance of the Old Testament and laying the foundation for the Lordship of Christ, we're not going to get another opportunity to lay this foundation together. And the difficulty is for you sitting in the pew, if I had just given you three or four references over the course of 10 minutes in a message about something else, I would have led you to have completely missed the point, to have not seen how crucial this is, how central this is to all of biblical revelation. And I could have said, "Well, there's a lot of references to it." You say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. There's a lot of references. You only gave three. How important could it be?" When we stop and realize that we can't exhaust this, then it starts to become more impressed upon our minds, the significance of what we're dealing with, perhaps not even fully recognizing the full significance of it, even in doing it this way. You see, the cumulative impact of looking at dozens and dozens and dozens of passages has the effect that we need and we would be wrong to hurry through God's word just because it's not keeping going as fast on our timetable as we might want it to be.

There comes a point, beloved, there comes a point where we have to slow down not just in preaching, but in your own life. Slow down, stop, and ask yourself: what is the most important thing in the universe? What is the thing that is going to most matter to you when you are 10 minutes from facing God in eternity? I can promise you it's not going to be your job. It's not going to be your education. It's not going to be your bank account. It's not even going to be your human relationships. What's going to matter to you 10 minutes before you die is that you have an assured, confident hope that as you are about to draw your last breath, that you're safe, that you're secure in Christ, that your sins are truly forgiven and you know it, and you can pass into eternity safe in the arms of Jesus. If you don't have that, your life has been wasted. Your life could be eternally lost. And so at some point, we have to stop and slow down and say, "You know what, I need to give this book central place in my life." And for a lot of us, we just need to acknowledge, "You know what, five minutes in a hurry in the morning isn't the central place in my life, is it?"

If Christ could come and lay down his life on the cross for us and to know that he loved us and gave himself up for us, that the Spirit brought him to us and saved us and led us to Christ and that we're safe throughout all of eternity by the shed blood of our blessed Lord and Redeemer, our substitute, our representative, beloved, I ask you, I ask you, I'll ask it in the third person, not be so direct: how could a person, how could a man, how could a woman understand that, understand the significance of being delivered from sin and Satan and judgment and the wrath of God, realize that it was done by Christ in love, that was unprompted, voluntary on his part for us, how is it, beloved, how is it that someone could have the faintest understanding of that and not want to know, not be drawn into knowing about that, knowing the foundation of his Lordship, knowing him in his attributes, in his character, in his death, in his life, in his resurrection, his ascension, his reign in glory, his coming again? How could we not want to know those things? I ask you if those realities are true in our hearts?

You see, it's a conditional statement. If those realities are true in our heart, how can we not be drawn to it? Those of you that have a happy marriage, isn't your heart drawn to know your spouse? Those of you perhaps in a relationship that's becoming serious, isn't your heart drawn to know that one? "Tell me about yourself. Tell me what you're thinking. Let's share this together." And yet, so many who claim to be Christians live their lives apart from this word, can set it on the shelf, better visual, closed, and stand away from it and live life day by day, week by week, month by month, with the book that tells them about the Lord they say they know, closed and off to the side, having no central place in their life. How could that be? I ask you, how could that be? Is that the mark of someone who has been born again by the Spirit of God?

No wonder Scripture tells us to examine ourselves, to see if we be in the faith. Test yourselves. 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" And beloved, I'm not laying down strictures about how much time you should read the Bible each day, or what your quiet time should look like. It's none of that. It's so much more than that. It's about where the affections of our heart lie. What is it that we're drawn to? What is it that we live for? What do we make life decisions based on? How do we choose a church? Somewhere, someplace, a true believer says, "Give me the word of God. I must have Scripture or I

die." Because Jesus himself said that. Jesus himself said that, "Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." And you know, you know, if Scripture didn't have so many warnings about false Christians, I wouldn't make such an emphasis about it. If Jesus didn't end with a warning at the end of the Sermon on the Mount about those that build their house on the rock and those that build it on the sand. If Jesus hadn't said in Matthew 7:21 to 23, "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord,' and I will declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'" If Jesus hadn't said many, maybe I could let this go. Maybe. If he had said some. If he said there will be a few but most of all, but generally speaking, everyone who names the name of Christ is okay. If Scripture had given us that impression, I wouldn't make such a point of this but here I am standing, not knowing if I will see any of your faces again or not, because who knows what tomorrow is going to bring, here we stand, here we have a moment standing, as it were on the ledge between time and eternity, the word of God emphasizing and demanding its importance and centrality in our lives through what it says, and alongside that, Scripture saying, there will be many who will hear those fateful words, "Depart from me. I never knew you." How could I possibly stand here and talk about these things and not warn an audience of this lovely size and demeanor to examine yourself and to measure yourself by the quality of the affection that you have for the word of God, not just on Sunday, but how it shapes your life, how it shapes your affections, your desires, the relationships that you want. How could I not do that? I can't. I can't. And so, beloved, and so that's why we've taken three and a half hours to get to this point to lay out all of these different texts of the centrality of the word of God to everything about the mission of Christ so that the weight of Scripture would impress itself upon us.

Now, if you would, turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15 as we consider prior Scripture and apostolic writing. While it might seem like we're just laying forth Scripture in what it deems important and letting the word of God declare what it thinks is important in these matters, apparently it's important to the Bible, and so it's important to us. You're familiar with the first four verses of 1 Corinthians 15. It's kind of a summary synopsis of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Have you noticed this in these four verses, listen as I read. Paul says, "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you," good news, glad tidings, I remind you of the gospel I preached to you "which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you." You see, Paul was in summary statement making the same point that I just made in the past 10 minutes. He said, "If you have received the gospel, it's going to be marked by the fact that you hold fast to the word that's been preached to you." This can't be casually set aside. You hold fast. You cling to that which is dearest to you.

When John Knox was dying in the middle of the 16th century, he was laying on his deathbed and he called his wife, as I recall, over and he said, "Read me the chapter where I first cast my anchor." He was referring to John 17, the high priestly prayer of Christ, that that was the text that the Lord used to awaken faith and lead him to Christ in. And at the beginning of his spiritual life, he was anchored in the word of God and in his dying breath, he was saying, "Take me back where I started." That blessed Reformer, that giant of the faith, had in one sense, the simplest of testimonies when it came full circle. "The word of God in John 17 gave me new life. Take me there again. Remind me of what I

knew. Let me hear it one more time before I enter into the presence of my Savior." He's holding fast to the word as he did throughout his entire astonishing life and ministry.

Hold fast to the word. If you hold fast, you're being saved. If you're not holding fast, you need to step back and say, "Wait, wait, wait, where am I then? If this can sit here unopened for an indeterminate length of time, by what measure am I saying I'm holding fast to this word? By what measure is this true to me? By what measure am I holding fast if I can walk away after false doctrine?" And how, I ask you as a pastor, am I not supposed to be animated talking about such things? I don't know. I can't.

Verse 2, sorry, 1 Corinthians 15:1 and 2, "by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain." Paul says, "For I delivered to you as of first importance," here's your greatest priority, this is the greatest priority in preaching, this is the greatest priority in life, this is the matter of highest first importance. "I delivered it to you. I gave it to you what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures," verse 4, "that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." You see it twice in that four-verse summary of the gospel he says it was in accordance with the Scriptures. It was in accordance with the Scriptures. He brought them back to what he had been preaching when he was verbally proclaiming day by day in that time. It's in accordance with the Scriptures.

Go to the book of Hebrews 1. We'll try to pick up the pace here a bit. Hebrews 1. Hebrews 1, the first two verses. "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." God spoke by his prophets. Now it's been fulfilled.

Look at 1 Peter 1. Just skip over Hebrews, skip over James, and you'll come to 1 Peter rather quickly. 1 Peter 1. After the opening greetings in the first two verses, He starts with this note of praise in 1 Peter 1:3. He says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Praise God, he's saved us in Christ. He has given us salvation.

He goes on and he speaks and explains that for a while. Then in verse 10, just drop down to verse 10 and see how salvation is tied to what we've been saying for the past three and a half hours from the pulpit. "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully." The prophets. He says, "Now I've brought up this thing about salvation. Let me talk to you about that, about this salvation. The prophets prophesied about the grace that was to be yours."

Verse 11, they inquired "what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that now have been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look." That's what the prophets did, they talked about the sufferings of Christ, the glories to come. They studied their own writings

because it wasn't fully clear to them and as they did that, God said, "You're serving a future time. You're serving the church to come." And here you and I are now having the benefit of the prophets, having the benefit of the apostolic writings, all of this for our benefit. The great ministries of those prophets through the ages had as its goal our spiritual well-being. How can you not value that? How can you not respect that? How can you not live and die for that?

In 2 Peter 3, 2 Peter 3:1 and 2, the same apostle writes this, "This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder." Huh, Peter, what do we need to remember? It's all good. Verse 2, "that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles." Remember what the holy prophets said before Christ came. Remember that. You see, as we look at Hebrews, he goes from talking about the prophets to the revelation of the Son. In 1 Peter 1, he talks about the prophets leading to the revelation of the Son. Here in 2 Peter, he talks about the prophets leading to the revelation of Christ. It's everywhere. It's everywhere.

You could search for the phrase, a companion phrase on the same theme, that Scripture must be fulfilled. For that, let's go back to the gospel of John. Go back to the gospel of John as a more generic term about Scripture must be fulfilled, the essential necessity of that. John 13:18, Jesus said to his disciples, he said, "I'm not speaking of all of you. I know whom I have chosen, but the Scripture must be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'" Scripture had to be fulfilled. It could be no other way.

In chapter 17, verse 12, and in these passages, we're reading the acceleration of events that lead to his crucifixion. Even in that, there's something for us to see, that as Christ, on the eve of the crucifixion, is talking about how essential it was that Scripture be fulfilled. We're going to see it in several examples here, just from the gospel of John, and you see this building momentum, this giant boulder rolling down the hill, as it were, all built around the momentum that Scripture must be fulfilled, culminating in the crisis of the cross. Jesus, in his high priestly prayer, where John Knox set his anchor, in verse 12, John 17:12, said, "While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that, the Scripture might be fulfilled." Multiple occasions.

In John 19:24, the soldiers said to one another, "Let us not tear it," referring to the garment of Jesus, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see whose it shall be." And then John adds this editorial comment about the significance of what they were saying. They didn't even realize in the moment what they were saying. The Apostle John tells us, "This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, 'They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.'" Looking back to Psalm 22. Said the Scripture had to be fulfilled.

Look at verse 28. "After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, (to fulfill the Scripture), said, 'I thirst.'" Psalm 69. Scripture had to be fulfilled. Jesus said it because Scripture had to be fulfilled.

Verses 36 and 37, just down the page. In verse 33, they came to Jesus, they saw he was already dead, they didn't break his legs, which would have been customary in order to accelerate death. Jesus had already surrendered his Spirit to the Father, so they didn't break his legs. Verse 36, "These things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken.' And again, another Scripture says, 'They will look on him whom they have pierced.'" Again and again and again.

Look at Acts 1:16. Peter is preaching, speaking to about 120 who had been gathered just before the day of Pentecost and he says in verse 16, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas." Scripture had to be fulfilled. I'm omitting Acts 18:24-28.

Look at Romans 4 as we come back to Romans again, coming full circle in our own right. Romans 4. I realize these are flying by you now. Paul says in Romans 4:3, "what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.'" Romans 10:11. Romans 10:11, "the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.'" Chapter 11, verse 2. "God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?"

Turn a couple of books over to the book of Galatians. Galatians 3 as we come back again to the apostolic writings. Galatians 3:8, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.'" Scripture. Gospel beforehand. Abraham. All of this joined together. Look at verse 22. "the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."

Beloved, I'm going to stop there and just make some concluding comments here. How do we know that Jesus is Lord? God had a plan before he created the world and from the point of creation to the point of Christ and the apostles, God over time revealed bits and pieces of it until it all fit together in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. God, in doing that, displayed many, many things. He displayed that he is Lord of history, that he knows in advance what is going to happen, and that he directs all events in order to accomplish his will and we see that in large measure by the way that the prophet spoke, predicted things, and then centuries and centuries and centuries later, Christ fulfilled them. In all of the delay, in all of the rise and fall of Israel, in all of the sufferings of his people between Moses and the coming of Christ, God never took his eye off the ball. God never forgot. God was always working to work this out and accomplish it. And we know that it is established as a work of God because he proclaimed it in advance before Christ came. No one can do that. No one can control the future except the one who is Lord over history.

And Christ came as the incarnation of that God, and as he fulfilled every prophecy down to the minutest detail, we have the testimony of millennia that Jesus Christ is Lord. Think about that, beloved. The testimony of millennia through God's prophets and the apostles give us the foundation to know and to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. These things point us to the sovereign will of God. He's been doing this. It's 3,500 years from today back to the time of Moses, beloved, and here we are standing on the foundation that they

laid. This has implications. This has ecclesiastical consequences. We don't need to be clever in our methods. We just need to declare the Scriptures and the Lordship of Christ.

And what we find in this, you can tell I've got something going on up here, right, by the delay? It just reminds me of visiting a church a few years ago. A 30-minute message with maybe one verse tacked on at the end after a lot of personal stories by the female speaker. I didn't know that was happening when I went there. Beloved, really? We're so advanced that we don't need the Scriptures when we gather together. Is that the message that we want to send? That someone's personal story is more important than what God has been saying in his word for thousands of years? We've got to do away with our fascination of new things, of new methods. We've got to do away with our love of getting our ears tickled and just get back to what God considers serious and important, and that's his word. The truth of the matter is, beloved, is that we have more material in the 66 books of the Bible than any one man could teach in his entire lifetime. If he started as a young man and went through verse by verse, Old Testament and New Testament, and then worked out all of the theological consequences of what that said, it's more than a lifetime could do. So why would we waste our time on other things when our time is so short? When the time is brief, Psalm 90:12, the time is brief, "Lord, teach us to number our days so that we may apply our hearts to wisdom," and the time is urgent, Psalm 90:17, "God, establish the work of our hands. Yes, establish the work of our hands." How could we do anything but give ourselves as a church and as individuals to the word of God? I ask you how we could do that, how to not make it central in our life, in our families, in our aspirations, I ask you?

You see, God works as we teach his truth. In a quote that I've used many times, I'm going to repeat it again from Charles Spurgeon as he talked about preaching the gospel, the principle applies to preaching the word of God. Spurgeon said, as only he could say, he said, "This talking about Christ crucified is said to be archaic and not at all suitable to the refinement of this wonderful age, but our mind is made up and our foot is put down. If it be foolish to preach up atonement by blood, we will be fools. And if it be madness to stick to the old truth just as Paul delivered it, we mean to stick to it for we are persuaded that the cross of Christ, which stumbles so many and is ridiculed by so many more, is still the power of God and the wisdom of God. Yes, just the old-fashioned truth. If you believe you shall be saved, that we will stick to and may God send his blessing upon it according to his own eternal purpose."

*Father, may that resolve be ours and may the blessing that Spurgeon asked for in those words, Father, may you send it on your word still today. Your word has an eternal purpose that must be fulfilled. It is an unstoppable force that drives the course of history itself. O God, O God, send forth your word. Send forth your gospel, not only here, but fling it through many faithful pulpits throughout the land. Fling it forward, Father, and bless it according to your own eternal purpose, to your glory as you have made yourself known in the gospel of your blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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