

How to Know Jesus Is Lord

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After a little bit of a hiatus, we return tonight to our mega-series titled "Building a Christian Mind," and today and on Sunday we're going to take two hours to do an introduction. This is an introduction, next week is an introduction, an extended introduction, to set the stage for the next segment of this series.

Now when we started, we established how we can know that God exists and we know that God exists through at least five different areas where he has made himself known. He's made himself known in creation, in the Canon of Scripture, in the conscience of man, in the person of Christ, and in the reality of conversion. When you were converted to Christ and the Spirit of God opened your eyes and moved your heart to embrace Christ by faith, God was making himself known to you personally by name. It's a wonderful concept to think on that, you know, Psalm 8 says, "What is man, that you look upon him," and the Christian can say, "Who am I, that you would look upon me by name and make yourself known to me?" And so we know that God exists because of the way that he has made himself known in creation, the Canon, conscience, Christ, and conversion.

We went on from there to answer the question: how do we know the Bible is true? How to know the Bible is true, and we said that we know the Bible is true, we accept the Bible is true, based on the highest authority in the universe, which is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ affirmed the authority and the inspiration of the Old Testament. He quoted it incessantly during his ministry. He expounded it, the words of the Old Testament were on his lips as he died on the cross. And he also prepared the way for the New Testament. He commissioned the apostles, he sent the Holy Spirit to work through the apostles in order to produce an accurate, inspired, inerrant record of his life and ministry and an interpretation of that. And so we know the Bible is true because we trust Jesus Christ as Lord. He said, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am," in Luke 6:46.

And Christ who accepted the word of God, accepted the Old Testament, and spoke of its authority going all the way back to creation and all the way through, that's enough for us. That settles the matter for us. Christ has taught us to receive the word of God. But as you work through these things in your mind, even that raises a question. You say that we accept the Bible on the authority of Jesus Christ. Well, let's drill a little bit deeper into the well there. On what basis do we receive his words? How do we know to trust him? Or to put the question for this next segment of our series: how do we know that Jesus is Lord?

How do we know that Jesus is Lord? On what basis do we know that? And you know, what we're trying to develop in this series, beloved, is to know why we believe what we believe. You know, you're here in this room, almost every one of you, because in one sense or another, you acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. You acknowledge that. You already accept that. You accept the Bible as true. You know that God exists. But the purpose of this series is to equip us to know why we believe what we believe, and to be able to explain it to someone else with the authority that is befitting the authority of God himself.

How do we know that Jesus is Lord? What does Scripture point us to in order to acknowledge his Lordship? Well, that stirring subject, that critical subject, is what's ahead of us for the next three weeks or so and I invite you to turn to the book of Romans as we begin this series. I'm going to show you something over these next two messages that is so painfully obvious that you'll wonder why you didn't see it and appreciate the significance of it before now. I know when this started being raised to my awareness and my study, I thought, how did I not appreciate the significance of this more deeply than I did before? How do we know that Jesus is Lord, that he is the Christ, in other words, God's Messiah, the one sent to redeem his people Israel and through them to be a blessing to all of the world, the Gentiles? How are we to know that? Well, let's read the first four verses of Romans and this will launch us into a couple of messages.

We see in Romans 1:1, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord." We'll stop there for those four verses. There is a super-concentrated expression of critical doctrine in those opening verses there. I know that when you read the book of Romans, you know, there's a tendency to want to get to chapters 6, 7, and 8, or to deal with, you know, the universality of sin in chapter 3, and you kind of read through, there's a tendency to read through these opening verses rather quickly thinking, "Well, it's just introductory, let's get to the meat of things as quickly as possible." That's a mistake, that's an easy mistake to make, but it is a mistake because Paul is setting forth matters in a concentrated synopsis here that has profound significance for the way that we understand everything about the Christian faith.

Tonight, we're just going to focus on one little phrase and show how it flows through Romans and other aspects of Scripture, but notice what he says at the end of verse 1. Paul's called to be an apostle, and so right there this links together what we said about how to know the Bible is true. We talked about the authority of the apostles, that Christ appointed the apostles to be instruments of his revelation to the church and to the world, and so it's linked that way. Paul says, "I'm set apart for the gospel of God." The gospel of God, and then he makes a clarifying or an expanding relative clause to talk about the gospel of God, "set apart for the gospel of God, which," the gospel of God is something which, of which something is true, and he says, "he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scripture." The gospel of Jesus Christ, which the center is the Lord Jesus himself, this gospel was promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy

Scripture. In other words, before Jesus Christ ever came to earth, there was groundwork laid, there was a foundation laid by God through the ministry of the prophets which we read about in the Old Testament. This is a gospel concerning his Son. His Son is, verse 3, he is the son of David, verse 3, and verse 4, he is also the Son of God.

Now, by what method, what method do we use, what method did the Apostle Paul use to establish the Lordship of Christ in this context? And as I said on Sunday, you know, the book of Romans is arguably, you know, there are men who would say that the book of Romans is perhaps the most important book in all of the Bible. Now, there's a sense in which it's not good to talk that way, to set one part of Scripture as over and above the other parts of Scripture. I realize that, and I don't like to talk in those terms, but there is something special about the book of Romans in that it is such a comprehensive and systematic explanation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and as you read through it, you get the full sweep of what salvation is and how God makes it known.

Well, in this most critical book, as Paul is introducing it, he goes right to the heart of the matter and he says, "As I am writing to you about the gospel of God, I would have you know up front that this is what God promised beforehand through the prophets." What is the method by which we establish the Lordship of Christ? We look at what God said before he ever came. For 1,500 years from the time of Moses down through the time of Christ with a 400-year parenthesis of silence before the incarnation, for over a thousand years, beloved, God through his prophets, God through the Scriptures was laying down what to expect when the Messiah came. He was giving us markers to look for that we would know who the Messiah was and be able to recognize him. And so being overly simplistic here at the start, we'll go through all of this later, it's as though for a thousand years through many different prophets, in many different times, God said, "Look for this." Number 1, look for this. Number 2. Number 3. Number 4. Number 5. This is a gross oversimplification but he said, "You need to be looking for this and when you see these things you will recognize that you have seen the Messiah, that you have found him, you know him to be true."

And so for 1,500 years before Christ came, there was groundwork and a foundation being laid to show who the Christ would be, and so how to know Jesus is Lord, there is an essential aspect of this in which we do this, we show that Jesus Christ is the one whom the prophets foretold. If you'll look at Deuteronomy 18, for example, and this is just an illustration of the matter. In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses is speaking to the children of Israel shortly before his death, before God removes him from the scene and Israel enters into the Promised Land. In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses told the children of Israel, he said, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers--it is to him you shall listen." It is to him you shall listen. And so Moses, using the future tense, says, "There is something, there is someone who will be coming that Yahweh will raise up for you. He'll be a prophet like me. When you see him, listen to him. He's the one that you shall hear. He's the one that you must recognize and give heed to."

And so in that little microcosm of an example, there is a sense in which the whole Old Testament is pointing us toward the recognition of a Messiah, and when Jesus arrived on

the earth and he taught and he ministered and he performed miracles and he did all that he did as revealed in the four gospels, as recorded in the four gospels, we see the fulfillment of what the prophets had foretold so that there is a perfect symmetry between what the Old Testament said you shall expect and what was found in Jesus Christ. You look at what the predictions were, what the overall picture of what this Messiah would be like, and you understand that on its own terms, and then you look at the life of Christ and you say, "Ah, he's the one and there could be no other." And therefore you receive his Lordship on that basis. We could put it this way, to speak with a little bit more technical language, we establish the context of the history of God's revelation. We establish the context of revelatory history. I like the way that rolls off the tongue. I had to say it that way. Revelatory history. And when you establish that context and you look at the life of Christ, that leads you inescapably to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. You use the word of God to verify the Son of God, just as the Son of God verified the word of God. There's a mutual testimony that the written word makes to the incarnate Word. You could say it this way, the Spirit of God uses the word of God to exalt the Son of God.

Now, with that little bit of introduction out of the way, I'm going to give this to you in three sections and then we'll have more sections like this on Sunday. But let me just give you a first point if you're taking notes here, and we'll just put it this way. We'll do it in the context of the book of Romans. We'll say in Romans you see promises made, promises kept. Book of Romans, promises made, promises kept, and what Paul says there in verse 2 of Romans 1:2, he says "the gospel of God was promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures." As Paul opens up this majestic, incredibly important letter of his, he starts and he builds on the foundation of what was previously said by God through his servants the prophets and Paul is very concerned to make this clear.

Now what you find in the book of Romans, beloved, is that he makes this point, he comes back to this point again and again and again in the book of Romans. He emphasizes throughout these 16 chapters that what he is teaching in Romans is the fulfillment of and consistent with what God had promised all along. And this was critical. This is critical. The Jews at the time were looking for a messiah, but in the degradation of their national religion, they were looking for one who would be a political deliverer for them. They were looking for someone who would deliver them from under the bondage of the empire of Rome and so they were looking for a conquering messiah and therefore had the wrong lens through which to understand the person of Christ. What Paul does and what he emphasizes here is that if you would look at the Old Testament rightly, you would see that Jesus Christ fulfills what should have been expected all along because for those who were expecting a great political deliverer, a crucified messiah didn't fit the bill. In fact, look over at 1 Corinthians 1 as my, you know, my mind engages things even as I'm speaking. In 1 Corinthians 1:22, Paul gives us a sense of the Jewish mindset in which he ministered. He said, "Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified." And what is Christ crucified to those Jews? It's a stumbling block. They were so conditioned to think of a political messiah that the idea of a crucified messiah was a stumbling block to them, which made it as a matter of course something that they rejected out of hand. The Jews heard this message in their carnal natural mind and said, "That can't be right because the Messiah comes to conquer."

Now going back then to Romans 1:2, what Paul is saying here is that this message of Christ crucified is what the prophets had been saying all along; you just need to know your Scriptures in order to see it. Now as you move on in chapter 1, Paul states that he is eager to preach the gospel, this gospel which is consistent with the prior revelation of God. In Romans 1:16 we read this, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel." Do you see, beloved, the link between verse 1 and verse 16? "I'm set apart for the gospel of God which was promised beforehand through his prophets and the holy Scriptures. I'm not ashamed of that gospel," which is a reverse way of saying, "I'm proud of the gospel. I delight in preaching the gospel. I'm not ashamed of it. I proclaim it gladly and freely." And he says, "I am 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. For in it," for in the gospel, in other words, "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" And then he goes on to say in verse 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

Now let's slow down a bit here. Paul says, "I'm here to preach the gospel. It's the gospel that was revealed beforehand by the prophets. I'm not ashamed of that gospel. Why am I not ashamed? Well, it's the power of God. Why would I be ashamed of the power of God? This gospel is unto salvation. It is the message that brings spiritual deliverance of men and women from the bondage of Satan and of sin. Why would I be ashamed of the gospel when it's from God, it's powerful, and it accomplishes this result? And this is a gospel, why would I be ashamed of it, this is a gospel for everyone who believes. Anyone anywhere in the world can hear the gospel and know that it is for them." If you are here and you are not a Christian, I can assure you the gospel is for you because it's available to everyone who believes. "I'm not ashamed of the gospel," and then he expands on that. He gets more specific, "Everyone who believes, Jew and Greek alike," that was a comprehensive description of humanity. "This gospel, it's in this gospel," verse 17, "where the way of God's righteousness is made known. Why would I be ashamed of it? It's consistent with what was written in the past, 'The righteous shall live by faith,'" quoting from Habakkuk 2:4. And then he goes on, continuing on, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel. I want to preach it." Why do you want to preach it, Paul? Verse 18, "For," there's another expansion of his reasoning here. "I want to preach the gospel, I'm glad to preach the gospel because the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The gospel alone is the answer to the collapse of society that we see around us," speaking in first century terms. Paul says, "We see the wrath of God manifested by the way society is going. What I am preaching to you, I'm not ashamed of it because it is the one thing that can deliver man from the wrath that is around him and upon him."

And so it's invigorating to see this. This is wonderful to see and to contemplate. And Paul goes on. He's given us a sense of the gospel, it's in accordance with promises previously made, and now what we're going to start to see is how those promises were kept. Paul, having introduced the subject matter of the wrath of God, look at Romans 3:19 and 20 as you turn there. Mankind in general and every man, woman, and child in particular, they're all lost. Separated from God. Guilty before the bar of his justice. Paul spent the

intervening chapters, the end of chapter 1, 2, and through 3 in order to establish this point. Verse 10 he said, "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God." And in verse 19 we read this chilling condemnation of all of humanity. "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin." This idea of works producing salvation, utter impossibility, cannot happen. That's why the true gospel is so critical and so so essential to protect no matter what because the guilt of man is universal. The law condemns everyone for their sin and thereby teaches every man to close his mouth and to hold his tongue before the holiness of God. There is nothing to say in our own defense. There is nothing that you can say in your own defense before God about your sin. You are guilty before him apart from Christ.

Now we take great encouragement by the fact we know that Paul didn't stop there. We know that Paul's going to go on and show forth the gospel and the means of deliverance that God has provided from that guilty, sinful, lost, and separated condition and that's what he does in verse 21. He now makes a hard pivot. He has conclusively established the guilt of every man, woman, and child, Jew and Gentile alike in the first three chapters through verse 20. Now he's going to talk about this gospel which he introduced in verse 1, "I'm set apart for the gospel of God." Now he's getting into the gospel portion after the law has done its work in convicting us and look at what he says in verse 21. "But now," sharp contrast. Works can't save you at all. No possibility. Any works-based religion is false by definition. "But now," Paul says, "the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law," meaning that the way to find the righteousness of God applied to you has been made known. And look what he says there in verse 21, we don't find righteousness by working our way and keeping the law, we don't do that, but he says this, "although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it." That's what I want you to see, that last clause there, "although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it." Paul is saying, "This gospel that I preach to you is something that the Law and the Prophets bore witness to all along."

Do you see what's starting to happen here? Paul said in the opening two verses the gospel was promised beforehand through the prophets. Now we see him circling back to that very same theme in chapter 3 verse 21, the law and the prophets bear witness to it. Where do we find hope? Is there any more important question? If we're all guilty of sin, if we're all condemned by God, then where do we find forgiveness? Where do we find release? Where do we find objective peace with God and the forgiveness of our sins if we cannot achieve it on our own? What Paul is saying here in this phrase, "although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it," he's saying this and what he's starting to establish with this repetition is this point right here that I'm about to make: from centuries ago, going back a millennia, going back two millennia to the era of Abraham even, for all of that time, God's servants, his prophets had been telling us what to expect. Deuteronomy 18:15, "God will raise up a prophet. When he comes, listen to him. Be looking for one to come." And so Paul says here as he pivots to the gospel once more, he says, "the Law and the Prophets bear witness to what I'm about to say."

Now beloved, as Paul spoke, he was not speaking as an independent authority in disregard to everything that came before. Paul was speaking in the flow of revelatory history. He was saying things that were consistent with what God had been saying through the prophets all along and he goes through and he explains the gospel. He speaks about justification, sanctification, glorification. He speaks about how it applies to Israel. He gives practical instruction and that takes you up to chapter 15. Turn to Romans 15:4 with me. Romans 15:4 and understand that all we're doing here right now, all we're doing is highlighting how much the Apostle Paul emphasizes that his teaching in Romans is built on the foundation of what was previously revealed. That's all we're doing. We're not talking about the content of it, the particulars. We're just wanting to see how woven throughout his entire argument is this pointing back to prior authority so that he says in Romans 15:4, "For 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."

The gospel was promised beforehand, Romans 1:2. The law and the prophets testified to the manifestation of the righteousness of God, Romans 3:21 and 22. Here in Romans 15:4, he points back yet again to what was written in former days. Paul began on the note of the foundation of the Old Testament. He has sustained that note as he's worked his way through, and I'm even skipping over other things that I could point you to that would show this. For example, in Romans 4, he uses Abraham and David as examples of justification by faith and so he incorporates and he weaves in Old Testament illustrations as he makes known the gospel that has now been fulfilled in Christ. So he began on that note, he sustains that note, and now we see that he ends on this self-same note. It is astonishing to see this if you're seeing it for the first time.

Look at the closing verses of Romans 16 beginning in verse 25. Romans 16:25 Paul says, "Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel," there it is again. It begins with gospel. It ends with gospel. It began with a gospel promised beforehand by the prophets. Keep reading, "according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations." This gospel has been disclosed and through the prophetic writings it's been made known to all nations according to the command of the eternal God, "to bring about the obedience of faith-- to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen." The gospel of Jesus Christ, beloved, Romans, is bookended with this point that we're making. It opens the first bookend – I know I'm repeating myself incessantly here – the gospel promised beforehand. It ends with the gospel made known through the prophetic writings. Everything in between is premised on an understanding of the way the entire book has been framed, that we would see that this is built on what was made known in the Old Testament. Romans, promises made, promises kept.

Now, let me just pause for a moment and just draw out a little bit of implication for what that means for us as individual Christians. I ask this sympathetically and I ask it, you know, gently, but are you familiar with the Old Testament? Do you read the Old Testament? It's not superfluous. It's the foundation of the revelation of the gospel that we know and by which we are saved. Paul builds the entire book of Romans on the

recognition that what he is saying was something that was established long before he was ever born. There is a flow of revelation, a progress of revelation, so that we are not free to ignore the Old Testament or to act like it's not important. The gospel is built upon it.

Now, let's go to a second point. A skeptic might say, "That's only one Bible book. You're making a big deal about nothing. You know, do we see it anywhere else in Scripture?" Well, I'm glad you asked. You say, "I didn't ask. You asked your own question." Well, it's the same thing. This next point, number 2, is brief but let's look at the time of Jesus Christ, promises made, promises kept. The time of Jesus Christ by which I mean we just want to take a look at the contemporaries of Christ, those who were alive at the time of Christ, how did they think, how did they speak as Christ was being made known there in the Jewish world at that time? Well, beloved, what you're going to find is this, is that Scripture emphasizes prior revelation as it introduces the person of Christ to us in the gospels.

Look at the gospel of Matthew 2. The gospel of Matthew 2. At the end of chapter 1 of Matthew, Mary had given birth to a son. Joseph called his name Jesus. And as the child grew and as there were days of unfolding in his early childhood, we read this in Matthew 2:19. You remember that Herod tried to destroy Christ as an infant, and he slaughtered every male child under the age of two in the city of Bethlehem, trying to exterminate Christ, and so he killed a lot of others so to try and get Christ in the process. The Lord, of course, warned Joseph in a dream. He took his family to Egypt. Herod died. Now it's safe to go back. That's the context here. Matthew 2:19, "But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.' And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there," he was afraid to go there because he was afraid that Herod's son would finish the work that his father had set out to do, "and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth," notice the next clause, "that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene." At that early point in the life of Jesus, Matthew emphasizes that what was happening here was a fulfillment of what the prophets had said.

Look over at the gospel of Luke 1. Luke 1, beginning in verse 68. Luke 1:68. You remember that John the Baptist was given to Elizabeth and his father Zechariah after the days of normal childbearing had passed for them. God enabled Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to the man we know as John the Baptist, and his father Zechariah, after his birth, prophesies. Verse 67, "his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying," and look at what he says as he speaks in response to the birth of the forerunner of Jesus Christ. Verse 68, he says, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David," verse 70, "as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old." He says, "This is exactly what the prophets said was going to happen, and now it is manifesting itself in real time before our very eyes." Verse 71, "that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our

father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."

Zechariah is rejoicing, he is prophesying under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and what he is saying is, and central to his point, is that what is happening now is what the prophets said were going to happen. You see it in Romans. You see it in Matthew. You see it here in Luke as Zechariah speaks about the holy prophets and father Abraham. This is remarkable. And here's what I want you to see, we've only scratched the surface, we've only started here with this, and in one sense what I'm doing here is so simple and basic, all we're really doing tonight and on next Sunday, if it goes as I expect it to do, we're just making observations as we look at the New Testament. We're only observing something that is very easy to overlook and what's very easy to overlook is how repeatedly, incessantly, the New Testament writers base the significance of their assertions about Christ on the fact that this is what the prophets told us to expect. And we're going to probably look at 20 or 30 passages, literally, by the time we're done, that are all making this same point.

Now why would I go to that trouble? Why would I take you through so much of what seems to be the exact same thing? Well, a couple of reasons. 1. I think that it's undeniable to say that there is a tendency to diminish the importance of the Old Testament among some Christians, forgetting that all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. But also, beloved, when we neglect the Old Testament, when we overlook this theme in the New Testament, we're missing something that is critically vital to our understanding of why we receive Jesus Christ as Lord. There was this broad, long period of time by which and during which God spoke and established what was going to happen, doing its centuries and millennia in advance. Now, how does anyone predict in advance what's going to happen 2,000 years from now? Or 1,000 years from now? Or 500 years from now? We have no idea what the world is going to be like next year. We don't know who's going to be President in 2025; that's only a year and a half away. And we're going to say with precision what happens 500 years from now? That's insanity by the natural human mind. The fact that the spokesman for God could speak centuries in advance and then their prophecies are fulfilled down to the letter in the person of Jesus Christ, shows us that this is a divine plan and gives us divine authentication, gives us divine affirmation that Christ is and only Christ is the Messiah that was to be expected.

That is essential and it is so profoundly authoritative in establishing Christ that prophecy was fulfilled like this, but because we tend to read our Bibles a little bit superficially, we look for the themes that we see and want to see and kind of sometimes miss what's put right there in front of us, we miss something that's really critical in building a Christian mind, which is how much God planned this in detail from the beginning of creation and announced it beforehand. And so you have, I fear, and this is not anything judgmental or anything like that, I think it's just a statement of reality, it would be natural for many, let's put it this way, it would be natural for many to say, "Well, that's probably not that important. You know, this idea of the prophets is not that important, I really hadn't noticed it before in Scripture as it's tied to the person of Christ. So I'm guessing it's really not that big of a deal." It would be easy to think that. Well, the only way that I know to

obliterate that misconception in the minds of some is to show example after example after example in Scripture that shows that the Scripture writers thought it was important, which means that God thought it was important, which means that we ought to think it's important. And if we are to think it is important, it's going to help us to see how often the argument is made in the pages of Scripture.

So we see it in Matthew, we see it in Luke, look at the gospel of John 1 as we continue to look at the contemporaries at the time of Christ, who made a big deal about what the prophets had said and that Jesus was the fulfillment of them, and that therefore he was the Christ, and that therefore he is Lord meaning that he has authority over all. John 1 beginning in verse 43. "The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'" Philip went to Nathaniel and Nathaniel being trained in the Scriptures, Philip in order to entice Nathaniel's interest and to make a great announcement to him, says, "The things that Moses and the prophets have been saying for 1,500 years, we found him! The hope of Israel, Nathaniel, I'm going to take you to him." Well this is staggering to contemplate. If I grabbed you by the elbow and told you that I was going to take you to meet a great man, there aren't many great men that come immediately to mind these days, are there? But I'm going to take you to meet a great man, a king, a president. You'd say, "Really?" Well take that and multiply it by like a thousand fold. Put yourself in Nathaniel's shoes in light of the things that we've been seeing here and how important the prophets were to everything. They have this longing for the Messiah to come and to deliver them. They've read these prophets throughout their lifetime. The prophets said there's one coming, there's one coming, there's one coming. And you're Nathaniel. You're just standing under a tree eating a piece of fruit. I'm taking a little liberty there, you know that, just to set the stage here. And Philip comes to you and says, "You know Moses?" Of course I know Moses. What's your point? "You know the prophets? All the prophets?" Yes, I know the prophets. What's your point, Philip? "You know what they wrote about one to come?" Yes, yes Philip, I know about the one to come. "I found him. He's Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And you drop the fruit out of your hand in stunned reaction. "What are you saying? What are you saying? Philip, you realize what a colossal statement that is that you just made? You're telling me that you're going to take me to the Messiah. God's anointed one, the appointed one to be the deliverer of our nation."

Nathaniel said to him, "You say it's Jesus of Nazareth? That piddly little town?" Verse 46, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'" This is a colossal moment. This is colossal. Nathaniel, a student of Scripture, a fearer of God, one longing for the deliverance of Israel, who knew his Scripture, with a measure of skepticism at the start, Philip, as it were, takes him by his arm and says, "Come on, Nathaniel, I'm going to introduce you to the Messiah." Wow. 1,500 years of prophetic preparation, and now Nathaniel is going to be one of the first to see him identified in public.

So in verse 47, "Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael said to him, 'How do you know

me?" We've never met. Understand that, beloved, he had never met Jesus, and Jesus knows him. And Nathaniel says, "How is this possible? How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." A glimpse into the omniscience of Christ. Nathaniel recognized it and by an act of the work of the Holy Spirit on his heart, enabling the revelation to be sealed to his own heart, Nathaniel answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel!" It's breathtaking. The prophets had prepared Nathaniel for the Messiah, and when he was introduced to him, he recognized him and bent his knee and worshiped him.

Verse 50, "Jesus answered him, 'Because I said to you, "I saw you under the fig tree," do you believe? You will see greater things than these.'" I'm going to build upon what you know from the prophets, and I'm going to show you even more to vindicate my claim to be the Messiah. He said to him in verse 51, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Nathaniel, throughout his childhood, into his adulthood, reading the Old Testament Scriptures, learning the picture of what to expect, longing for the fulfillment of it, and now in human flesh before him, everything the prophets had promised, God had kept. And he bowed down and acknowledged it and recognized him as the Son of God.

Beloved, Scripture has a crucial, irreplaceable place for us to recognize and know that Jesus is Lord. Nobody, nobody could have possibly fulfilled by accident all of these prophecies. This was the work and the plan of God being worked out and then fulfilled in perfection by the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we know that Jesus is Lord? Scripture teaches us, and we're going to stop here for this evening, but Scripture teaches us to know the Old Testament. You can start at creation and just start going through the Old Testament and the Old Testament will show you what to look for and what to expect. And once you know the expectation, once you know the qualifications, you read the life of Christ in the four gospels and you say, "That's him. That's the one." That was the method that the Apostle Paul used and relied upon to establish the truth of the gospel to his readers. It's what the contemporaries of Christ knew that they were supposed to do. The prophets said. The prophets said. Moses and the prophets wrote about this. And they looked and they saw him and they knew from what had been prepared beforehand that now the Messiah was in front of them.

It's amazing. You know what else is amazing? In no lesser way by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, when Christ is proclaimed to you through the pages of Scripture, the same thing is happening. This is what was written by God. Now it is made known to you, you by the power of the Spirit, based on the written word of God, have the Messiah right before your eyes. And this Messiah who was first being promised multiple millennia ago from today, is the same Messiah offered to you for the salvation from your sins. You can look to the Lamb of God and be saved forever. And those of us that know him, I feel like I'm shrinking into something less than the size of a thimble before your very eyes as I say these things, we know, those of us that are Christians, we know him. We know the Messiah. We know the Son of God. And we know him not simply as the one who was prophesied and predicted and fulfilled the prophecies, we know him as the one who loved us by name. He loved me and gave himself up for me. He came for us. He came for you. If you are a Christian, when he was on the cross, in some way I can't explain, but

somehow he thought of you because he took all of your sins into his body on the cross and owned them as his own, took responsibility for what you had done, your crimes. He took responsibility for your crimes by name in essence said, "Father, punish me on her behalf. Punish me on his behalf so that he might go free." That's the Christ and the Messiah we know, promises made, promises kept.

Bow with me in prayer, will you?

"I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner condemned, unclean.

How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
O Christ, How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!"

Thank you for laying the foundation in the Scriptures for so long so that there is a prior pre-existent basis of authority by which we could receive you and know you and recognize you as Lord. Thank you for the Spirit who has made him known to us, has made you known to us in the marvelous act of regeneration, leading us to Christ, forming faith in our hearts that we might respond to this great and glorious gospel. O Christ, we are in the presence right now of the Messiah, the one promised from long ages ago, and we see that God kept his promise and sent his Son. How we love you, how we worship you, how we long to know you more as Lord as we enter into these things more deeply in the weeks to come. May you so revolutionize and expand and deepen our understanding that we might fully comprehend what is the depth and the breadth and the height and the depth of the love of God which surpasses knowledge, knowing that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Establish us, root us deeply in this soil. Deliver us from a love of self, a love for our works, an impression with being impressed with our own self. As we study these things together, Lord, in the days to come, may the words of John the Baptist be the prayer for our own heart, may we decrease that he might increase. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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