

Following Jesus

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[0 : 00] Well friends, while the kids are heading out, I've got a question for you to talk to the person next to you. Can you discuss this question? How do you know that the Bible is true? Right? So there's the question, talk to the person next to you, how do you know the Bible is true? Why do you think the Bible is true? Well there is an outline in the bulletins for you to have a hold of, but yeah, why do you think the Bible is true? Important question, why do you think the Bible is true?

I mean, how do you know that something is true in our world or relatively true today, in our world today? I mean, you can open up the ABC website newspaper and it's got that, you know, fact checking, you know, truth is what you've been reading true. It seems that objective truth can be hard to find and whether we believe the Bible is true or not though is something that would require probably a lecture and a deep study into things, but let's have a crack at that this morning for a while anyway. It's important because the implications of the truth of the Scriptures are infinitely important. I mean, eternal destiny depends on what the Scriptures say, if they're true or they're false. It's of eternal significance. So it's one thing for John to say that what he says is true, but then we might believe it's true because he says it's true, yeah? And then that's kind of a circular argument. John says it's true, therefore we think it's true, therefore it's true.

Let me point out a couple of things that might help us by way of just sort of introduction on this topic, right? Would you believe the Bible is true if someone was an eyewitness to the resurrection but not a Christian in the first century? They believed in the resurrection and said the things that were written about Jesus are true. Would you believe that testimony? Well, probably not because that person doesn't really exist, right? Anyone who saw and believed the physical resurrection of Jesus then by definition at one level becomes a Christian because a Christian is someone who believes that God raised Jesus from the dead and confesses with their mouth that he is Lord.

Jesus happened and lived and died and rose again and the person who saw it would go, well, yeah, that's if they believed it, they're a Christian. So you won't have any non-Christians writing accounts about the resurrection of Jesus if they believed it, they'd become, they'd be Christians. And if they did write something that you thought was true, who they weren't Christian, right? Well then that would make what they write of a higher authority than what we read and so their word would sit over the Bible. So at that level the Bible is probably the higher authority on truth.

So at one level we should expect that the authority of the truth of the Bible should be found nowhere else than in the scriptures themselves. Well, could we then, another way, can we deduce that the scriptures are true by reason?

[3 : 31] Just work it out ourselves. Well, if we could, well then our reason would be the higher authority on truth.

And we would then be able to rewrite the scriptures and make sure that what we said was what they were saying was true. I mean, our reason would then dictate what is true.

So our reason would say, well, dead people stay dead, don't they? I mean, I've never seen a dead, I've buried people. They don't sort of knock on the casket and come and say, surprise, I'm alive.

Dead people stay dead. And so by reason we'd sort of write that sort of thing out of the Bible.

There's a bloke named Marcion who removed the whole entire Old Testament out of the Bible and the bits of the Old Testament and the New Testament got rid of that as well.

So he's Mr Reason. But there's more recently a thing called the Jesus Seminar. You may have heard about it. It was found in 1985 and it removed anything that doesn't think is the authentic words of Jesus or the authentic deeds of Jesus.

[4 : 45] So what they did, they went through and examined the Bible and then they said, well, they recognised approximately 18% of what is written in Jesus' words is authentic and about 16% of the deeds of Jesus in the Gospel is authentic.

So they just reef out the rest and you get what you get. Interestingly now, with the popularity of the stage show Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the USA, carefully edited out the miracles of Jesus, his resurrection and ascension, focusing just on the morality of Jesus the man and so made his own neutered Bible.

You can get a hold of it if you want to. The thing is, you and I, the world, will only believe that the Scriptures are true and have authority over our lives if God's Holy Spirit is at work in us.

And then God is at work in us, opening the eyes of our hearts and opening up our ears to hear and believe because it's the sheep of God's pasture who hear God's Word and believe, as Jesus says in John chapter 10.

You could also go to Jesus at one level. He was obedient to the Father and over and over again in John and other Gospels he says, it is written in the Old Testament.

[6 : 14] And we see him fulfilling what is written in the Old Testament in his life of obedience. And so if God is at work in us by his Spirit, it's reasonable for us to believe that the Scriptures are true and that what John has written is true.

A tangential way forward for some could be to consider what Jesus claims about himself and see how that stands historically and so touch tangentially onto the Scriptures and then we start to see that they are true and we can recognise that they are true, being the self-authenticating nature of God's Word.

At one level we're in a better position today than the disciples were back in John 21 because as yet they didn't have the Holy Spirit and so the resurrection simply didn't make sense to them yet.

They just hadn't got it, hadn't clicked, hadn't made sense. Too strange to make sense of. And so here Jesus reveals himself again in verses 1 to 14 to the disciples.

This is the third time that Jesus reveals himself, alive to the disciples after being crucified. Once to all the disciples except Thomas on the third day after being crucified.

[7 : 35] Once to all the disciples including Thomas, a week later, we saw that last Sunday. Both of those times in Jerusalem. And now to five of the disciples including Thomas, sometime after that down in the region of Galilee.

Here's a map so you can have a look at it, just a bit of a map. Now, prior it had been in Jerusalem, that's where they appeared twice to the disciples. Now he's appeared to them by the Sea of Tiberias or the Sea of Galilee, same thing.

It seems that disciples have returned home after the Passover in Jerusalem with a monumental adventure that happened and it still seems they haven't grasped the Gospel, the significance of the resurrection yet.

Now, that's where they are down in Cana. You can turn that off now. Down in Galilee. Thank you.

The resurrection of Jesus has been, the revelation of Jesus has been a theme of John. In chapter 2, he reveals God's glory at the wedding of Cana in Galilee.

[8 : 40] The same region where these events are happening and it's kind of a narrative arc. In Cana in Galilee, he reveals himself and now, finally, in Galilee, he reveals himself again at the end of the book.

In chapter 17, he's revealed the glory of God to the disciples. And now he reveals himself to the despondent disciples again. Simon Peter, the fisherman, is there.

Thomas is there again, the one who confessed that Jesus is both Lord and God. God. Interestingly enough, Nathaniel's there, the one who had doubted that anything good can come from Nazareth. And two others, we're not quite sure who they are, but likely one of them is John, who is the one who wrote this book, who is the eyewitness. Now, what do you do if the one who has provided all that you need for the last three years has apparently gone and left you?

He's turned up a couple of times and now has gone and left you. Obviously, if you're Peter, well, you go fishing, back to something you know how to do so you can get something to eat.

[9 : 48] But then, like most fishermen, not much good, didn't catch any fish. So, as the sun comes up, Jesus, as yet unrecognised by them in the dim light, says, hey guys, that's what the idea of little children would mean, coming across the water to them.

Caught anything? Expecting the answer, no. And they give the answer, no, which is the usual answer that fishermen will give you if you ask them by the side of the ocean if you're caught any fish.

They'll say, no, I've been fishing a while, I haven't caught any fish, don't ask me if I caught any fish because usually the answer is no. And they get this word from this man that they suffer the advice from someone who may or may not know anything about fishing hay.

And the advice is not necessarily of divine origin. As fishermen know, you get some advice after catching that fish, well, I'll give it anything a go. So long, I've got no results there, I'll listen to what you say.

So, when Jesus tells them to cast in on the right side of the boat, which they do, immediately, their nets are full. And John recognises that it's no one less than Jesus who has been speaking to them.

[11 : 11] And so Peter leaves his nets again, dives in, swims over to Jesus, and the eyewitness stays in the boat but tells us what Peter did.

And now Jesus provides the disciples again. He provides them again as he's got some breakfast ready for them to eat. He's already got some fish and bread cooked on a fire for them.

And in verse 9, Jesus asks them to bring some more over. Miraculously, there's 153 fish. They haven't broken the net. They didn't need to ask who he was, they recognised who he was.

And they recognised him as the one they'd seen twice before. And so the scene is now set for Jesus to speak to Peter. And in so doing, he restores him to the band of disciples and assures him of his forgiveness from his abandoning of him and then commissions Peter for mission and ministry. So let's have a look at Jesus restoring Peter. Peter's asked by Jesus about his devotion to Jesus himself. Do you love me more than these? Now what does he mean?

[12 : 27] What could he mean by asking that question? Does Peter love Jesus more than he loves the other disciples? Could be the question. Or does Peter love Jesus more than the other disciples love Jesus?

Remember, previously Peter boasted, I'll never leave you, Jesus. I'll never deny you. But he did. And Jesus knew he would deny him three times before the rooster crowed.

John chapter 13 spoke about it. And then he did. In John chapter 18, we read about him denying Jesus three times. And then the rooster crows. And now that all happened in public.

And now in public, Jesus speaks to him. And Peter says, I do. And the second time he's asked if he loves Jesus.

And now in public for a second time, he says, yes. And the third time he's asked by Jesus if he loves him. And now in public for a third time, Peter says, yes. And there can be no doubt whether it's true or not.

[13 : 33] Because Jesus knows the thoughts and the hearts of everyone. Because Jesus is Lord and God. He's omniscient.

He knows everything. You can't pretend, right, you'll protest about your love for Jesus. He knows if you love him.

You can't pull one over Jesus' eyes. And Peter's understandably grieved by the repeated questions. But, just as he publicly denied the Lord Jesus three times, he's publicly now confessed his love for the Lord Jesus.

And Peter's now been commissioned as a pastor of Jesus' sheep. He's told to feed my lambs, verse 15. He's told to tend the sheep, verse 16.

He's told to feed my sheep, verse 17. And there's a few things about this, right? First, the sheep are not Peter's sheep.

[14 : 44] The flock is Jesus' flock, Jesus' precious lambs. That's the first thing. Second, there is no hint that Peter is one, is greater greater than any of the other apostles.

He's not the prime one, if you like. And nor is there any hint of apostolic succession for him here. Peter is simply a fellow elder, a fellow pastor of God's flock.

something that is clear in the scriptures. I mean, Acts chapter 20, let me read out to you Acts chapter 20, when Paul addresses the Ephesian elders and tells them to do the same kind of things that Peter now has been commissioned by Jesus to do.

God says, through Paul to the Ephesian elders, pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock which is the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God which you obtained with his own blood.

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock and from among your own cells will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.

[15 : 57] But hear the words then, the Holy Spirit had made them overseers to care for God's church. And there's something which Peter himself makes clear in 1 Peter chapter 5.

I'll read it out to you. 1 Peter chapter 5 is where Peter says, So I exhort the elders among you as fellow elders, right, no superiority here, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that's to be revealed.

Shepherd the flock of God that's under you exercising oversight not under compulsion but willingly as God would have you not for shameful gain but eagerly not domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock and when the chief shepherd appears you'll receive the unfading crown of glory.

Jesus is the model when it comes to feeding the sheep. After all, he's the chief shepherd of the sheep. And in John chapter 10 we see that Jesus has great care for the sheep.

He knows them by name. In John chapter 10 we see that Jesus is the good shepherd, the one who is not like the hired hand who is only after his own wage. He's willing to protect the sheep from the wolves and those who devour the sheep.

[17 : 14] But not only to protect the sheep but to lay his life down for the sheep. Something that Peter understood and taught his flock. In 1 Peter chapter 5 Peter passes on instructions to those who would be shepherds of the sheep as well to those who would be pastors as just as Jesus commissioned Peter.

Nothing changes, right? I'm going to teach you a bit about sheep and shepherds now. First of all, sheep, you and I, right, are God's sheep.

Those who serve as shepherds need to do so willingly, not under compulsion. compulsion from others who pressure you into doing the job.

If you don't want to do it, then don't do it. Much better that you don't. And those who serve as shepherds must not be in it for financial shameful gain.

That is, we're not in it for the money. Must never be in it for the money. Not fleecing the sheep, looking to make a huge profit, but seeing where you can actually put money aside and sneak it off other ways.

[18 : 33] Those who serve as shepherds must not be domineering, lording it over the people, not coercing, bribing, manipulating people to do what you want them to do.

Rather, be an example of what it means to be a sheep, a good sheep, a godly sheep, a faithful sheep, a wise sheep, a generous sheep, a praying sheep, a loving sheep, and call the sheep to follow your example, my example, as I follow Christ, the chief shepherd.

But let me tell you something else about sheep. Sheep bite and kick. Have you watched Clarkson's Farm?

It can be a very painful thing to be a shepherd when you're trying to deal with sheep up close. And Jesus tells Peter his future and look at it, verse 18.

Look at his future. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.

[20 : 00] This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God. And after saying this he said to him, follow me. Peter's own end will be the way of the cross.

That's how it will be. And like Jesus who glorified the Father on the cross, so Peter will glorify God on the cross as well. He will have his hands stretched out which was clearly understood as the way you'd carry the cross bar of your method of execution to your place of death.

And he led, carried to his place of execution. And by way of encouragement Peter's told to follow Jesus.

Verse 19 follow him to death. That's the call to discipleship which Peter will do. He will follow in Jesus' footsteps faithful to death on a cross and he will follow him in glorifying the Father in his faithful witness to Jesus.

We understand that Peter was crucified, martyred under Nero. We read about it in the martyrdom from Clement of Rome writing to the Corinthians in about 96 AD.

[21 : 32] We read about his crucifixion from Tertullian writing in about AD 212. The idea that Peter was crucified upside down is a thing of legend and there isn't much to point to it as evidence that he was.

Peter died as a leader of the church in Jerusalem. One of the things that we note about Christians is that we die well.

That's important. We don't grasp that life as this is all there is. We don't die wondering whether we'll make it to heaven or not.

We don't die fearing death but we look death in the face and we say death is swallowed up in victory. Oh death where is your victory?

Oh death where is your sting? Because Jesus died and rose again and defeated death and defeated sin for all time. And those who mourn our departing won't mourn like the rest of the world hoping that things are better for us.

[22 : 46] No. We grieve because those we know who have died in Christ. We miss them, yes. We feel the loss, yes. But we don't grieve like the rest of mankind because we know we will see them again in glory for Jesus has risen from the dead and so paved the way to life.

However, back to John's gospel again now, verses 20 to 23. We see there in an account of Jesus' interaction with Peter and John, Peter asks, what about John?

See there in verse 21? I mean, how's he going to die? Since you just told me how I'm going to die, well, what about that bloke? Well, verse 22 could be a bit hard to understand.

Jesus tells Peter not to worry about how John will die, but none of this is his business. However, if it is your fate to be crucified, it will be John's fate to live to an old age.

Jesus is retaining John for a long life of faithful ministry. That's what he's saying in verse 22. And so there's certainly something to be cleared up here.

[24 : 12] We know that John died and he's certainly not alive on earth today. And we know that Jesus hasn't returned yet. And John clears it all up for all the reasons to understand.

Jesus didn't say that John would never die. He just said, if it was his will to remain, then that's my business. Clearly, it's not his will that he remained on earth until Jesus returned, for he too died at a very old age.

As far as we know, after being returned from exile, he dies in Ephesus. Jesus and yet Jesus hasn't returned yet.

Though it seems that speculation must have been rife that as John got older, Jesus is about to return. John's getting older, Jesus is going to come back any minute now.

John outlived Peter, but they both died as loyal followers of Jesus Christ. Christ. And we see that John recommends belief in verses 24 to 25.

[25 : 24] For a third time we get this conclusion in John's gospel. There's sort of three conclusions in John's gospel. The first was in John chapter 19 verse 35. It recounted by John as an eyewitness to the events of Jesus crucifixion.

He who saw is born witness. His testimony is true and we know that what he's telling is the truth that you may believe. Jesus really did die for our sins as a sacrificial Passover lamb.

That was the first conclusion in John's gospel. And the second was in John chapter 20 verse 30 to 31 recounted by John as an eyewitness of Jesus resurrection.

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and by believing you may have life in his name.

Jesus' resurrection guarantees the resurrection of all people those who believe to eternal life in glory and those who don't to eternal existence cut off from him cut off from the glory of God and experience the just wrath of God forever.

[26 : 42] John chapter 3 verse 36 He who believes has life he who does not believe will not see God for God's wrath remains upon him. And thirdly here in John chapter 21 verse 24 recounted by John that all he has written is true.

John reveals his hand finally at the end of the gospel as a writer of the gospel of John this is the disciple who has written these things that we know and we know his testimony is true.

We have every reason to believe that the entire biography of Jesus life death resurrection and appearance is true.

For by the time it was written Peter would have been dead as well. And so three times John's recommending that we believe.

We believe that Jesus died. We believe that Jesus rose and we believe that what is written is true. There's no doubt that what he's saying is true.

[27 : 57] Now there are many other things that could have been written by John that Jesus did but that would fill the entire world's libraries or the entire world.

This is not necessarily speaking in exaggerated terms either. If you consider who Jesus is then the world's not enough to contain him not enough to contain it all for he is the one who is the creator of all.

And that would take a lot to write about. He's the one that has created everything in this world. So every book that's ever been written about the world as we know should be recast to give credit to the creator.

He's the one who is God incarnate, a mystery too great for us to fully comprehend. He's the living word of God who reveals the very character of God, the truth of God.

He's the suffering Messiah, the obedient son, the risen Lord, the judge of all who you could never fully write enough about the things that Jesus is and does.

[29 : 08] But what we have is a select record and it's more than enough to respond to John's recommendation, believe. And Jesus' command to Peter and so to all who would read these words is this, follow me, you follow.

So what we have in John's Gospel is not just John's words but it's also God's word. It's the very word of God and so written word of Jesus.

And what John wrote recorded for us is what Jesus is saying today. And so it's not just John calling us to believe and Jesus commanding us to follow but it's Jesus who is calling us to believe and Jesus who is calling us to follow, commanding us to follow and so doing have life in his name.

You might doubt that Jesus has ever existed. But these things are written to assure us that he really did and he experienced everything that humans experienced.

Grief, loss, sadness, hunger, pain, death, all except sin. you may doubt that Jesus rose again but these things are written to remove that doubt and to assure us to believe.

[30 : 53] Thomas can take us and assure us of the very real physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. You may doubt that Jesus will return again.

But John spoke clearly that he will. He will return in John chapter 14. In a little while he will come back.

And so Jesus requires a response from those who hear his word and that response will be obvious for all to see. Here's three kind of responses. One is a response of faith and belief, that is trust.

And so following him as Lord, that's something that should turn our life on its head. For no longer will we live for ourselves but we'll live for him who died for us, submitting to him and obeying his word.

That can be very difficult or more accurately, will be very difficult in a world that's opposed to him and his people. But follow we will.

[32 : 02] And wherever he takes us, we'll be willing to trust him whatever befalls us, even if it's suffering and to the point of death.

Whether it makes life easy, whether it makes life hard, we'll follow. However, some people in this room are just not there yet.

You might need to investigate things a little bit more before you're ready to follow Jesus, which is totally appropriate, given the implications of what Jesus is asking us to believe.

And so a response of inquisitiveness is good. Genuinely seeking to see if what John wrote is indeed true. The third response is a dangerous one.

Denying that what John wrote is true. And so have no excuse when you meet Jesus as Lord and God and Judge who will judge the living and the dead.

[33 : 04] friends, remember this. What John has written is true. What John has written is enough for us to believe that Jesus is the Christ and to believe in him and so have life in his name.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you very much for revealing your truth to us in the Lord Jesus.

Please help us to follow him, obediently submitting to him as our Lord and our God, knowing the great forgiveness of sins we received and the great hope of eternal life in his name.

Amen. Thank you very Holy One of you Can get to have