

God and Truth: In That Order

Building a Christian Mind

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Well, the secular experts on public speaking usually will tell you that you have to say something really gripping and captivating in the first couple of minutes of your message or you'll lose your audience all the way through for the rest and so you have to really come with something that really grabs their attention. I want to tell you today that I'm not going to do that. I don't like to play by the rules that others set, for one thing, that's a whole other story. But I just want to tell you upfront today that today's message is a slow, plodding presentation of truth that is repetitive of things that I've said in the past. I know that doesn't necessarily stimulate you, but just stay with me. And all of that's designed to make one simple point by the end of our time together this morning but it's really perhaps the crucial point of them all. It is the crucial point toward human knowledge and discernment and walking with God and coming to a true knowledge of Christ. It's the central point of them all and so I think it's worth building the foundation to do that. The title of today's message is "God and Truth," then a colon, "In That Order." God and Truth: In That Order, and you'll see the significance of that as we go along.

We are building a Christian mind, and we've been doing that all year and we have arrived at the sixth of a series of presentations in a thematic way that build a Christian mind, and the series that we're at, the sub-series that we're at right now, is how to know that truth exists. How to know that truth exists, and the idea is not simply here that the Bible is true, we've already covered that. We're talking about is there such a thing as truth at all? Is there a principle of absolute transcendent truth that applies to all of humanity, at all time, in all places without exception? That is denied in our world today, but we assert what Scripture teaches that truth does exist. It's an abstract concept, and I could sympathize to a large degree with those who struggle with this or perhaps are interested in what seem to be more practical things, but my beloved friends, what I want to assure you is that there is no more practical question than this one, because everything flows from the existence of absolute truth. And what I want to do today, there is a measure of repetition and remembrance of things that we've said in the past, but I want to give you three points here this morning based on things that we've said and then working out some of the implications from them. And let me just say this, my dear friends, it is essential for us to not only exegete the Scripture and exposit the Scriptures for what individual passages say, we have to be able to take those different passages, most of which we've taught in other settings, and bring it together, bring their truth in a synthetic way together so that we see how they fit together and how they help us interpret the world around us. That's

really, really essential and perhaps is a sometimes missing element in Bible teaching to help us see how all of these things fit together, and what we're doing today is to help you see how everything fits together in the most fundamental way.

So we're going to look at, I'm going to give you the outline ahead of time, we're going to look, first of all, at the reality of revelation. The reality of revelation. Secondly, we're going to look at the reality of judgment. And then thirdly and finally, we're going to look to the response to revelation and judgment. The response to revelation and judgment. So the reality of revelation, the reality of judgment, the response to revelation and judgment, points one, two, and three. That's what we're going to do and we're going to joyously plod through these things together and come to a compelling conclusion that you would not reach unless you went through the process that we're going to go through this morning.

So let's consider the reality of revelation and we go back to the very beginning of this series, we go back to the fundamental nature of human knowledge and human existence. We asked the question at the beginning, how do we know that God exists? How do we know that God exists? There has to be a better answer than what the hymnwriter used to say, "You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart." A completely subjective, sentimental approach to things that does absolutely no good to anybody except to make us feel good and sugary for a little bit while we're singing a song like that. That does nothing to satisfy the human mind. I ask you how you know God lives, how Christ lives, and you say, "Oh, I know he lives in my heart." Well, what am I supposed to do when I'm living after you're dead, then what is my hope and my assurance? It's quickly exposed at how superficial those emotional things are. How do we know that God exists and, beloved, this is review, this is all completely review here. We know that God exists because God has made himself known. We know God exists because God has made himself known, which is independent of what you and I think about it, how we feel about it, or what anybody else says about it. God has made himself known, and he has done so in several overlapping and complementary ways, overlapping and complementary ways, and this is the foundation of human knowledge with what we're saying right here, the foundation of knowing that truth exists.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Psalm 19 with me. Psalm 19, and because we have covered these things in the past, I'm just going to allude to them ever so quickly but we need to remember and recall these things as we move into the consequences of them. God has revealed himself and made himself known in creation, first of all. In Psalm 19:1, we read that, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge." Every time that we walk under the umbrella of the sky, every time that we breathe in the air, we are living and we are seeing the revelation and the manifestation of God. Scripture says that he has made himself known in the heavens and as a result of that, we know that God exists by the imprint that he has left on his creation that testify to the reality of his eternal power and divine nature. We know God exists because of creation.

Now secondly, how else do we know that God exists? We know that God exists through the Canon of Scripture. The Canon of Scripture. Drop down to Psalm 19:7. Psalm 19:7,

in a verse that literally invites every person to come into a deep knowledge of God, we read in Psalm 19, "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." That even simple, uneducated men can know the God of the universe through what he has revealed in his written law, in his written testimony to himself. And so Scripture speaks that God exists and God has made himself known through the word, through the 66 books and no more of the Bible. In the Old and New Testaments, 39 books in the Old, 27 in the New, God has manifested himself and made himself known.

Now, everyone in this room either has a Bible or could easily have access to a Bible. There are Bibles under the seat in front of you. You're free to take one home with you as a gift from our church. Now, there's no reason for anyone in a position of having a Bible in their own language of saying, you know, to claim ignorance of God, to say that, "I don't know where to find God." God has made himself known in the creation in which you live and in a Bible which you can easily have in your own hands and read for yourself. The fact that most people don't take the time to read the Bible at all, the fact that even many professing Christians have never taken the time to simply one time read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation end to end and to read everything that God has to say, that's not an indictment against God for hiding himself and making it difficult. It's an indictment on the indifference of man to the revelation of God. If we think we have something more important to do than to know God's revelation, then that's on us. It's not God's fault that our priorities are so out of skew.

God's revealed himself in creation and in the Canon of Scripture. Let's go further, turn to the book of Romans 2. Again, this is all review, hasty review; we've done individual messages on all of these points. In Romans 2, Romans 2 in verses 15 and 16 for now. The Apostle Paul is writing to the effect that God has made himself known and that in Romans 1:18 through chapter 3, verse 20, he's showing that all men are without excuse. And sometimes the question comes up and people think it's a really difficult question and, "How are you going to get out of this one, Pastor?" The question will come up, "Well, what about those that have never heard the gospel? How is it fair for them to be judged? How can God be righteous and judge those that have never had a Bible," and all of that? The people who ask that question almost exclusively all have a Bible of their own, so it's a red herring from the beginning, but even to their red herring there is a clear answer from the word of God about that when he says in verse 14, let's start there, Romans 2:14, "when Gentiles, who do not have the law," even if they don't have the Scripture, when they, "by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law." In other words, what Paul is saying here is that even if someone does not possess the written word itself, there is another principle of law that is operative in their minds and in their hearts. They know basic moral principles from God because he wrote it on their hearts. We see that in verse 15 by the way that they live, avoiding some behaviors and conducting others, verse 15, "They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus." You don't have to have a Bible to be under the judgment of God. God will judge those who have never had the law by the operations of their own

conscience and by their operation of their own conscience, which is a law under that person itself, people don't even abide by their own conscience. That's why people have guilty consciences when they do that which they perceive to be wrong. And God will just judge by, on that basis, without regard to the gospel, you're still guilty because God imprinted on the human heart a sense of his moral law of what he requires and that principle is operating throughout all of humanity. God has revealed himself by that unifying principle of conscience that is present in all. Now, yes, people suppress their conscience, they sear their conscience, they violate their conscience, they harden their conscience, but that's only to prove the point that you have to actively suppress that which God put in you in order to live in such abandoned sin.

And so we see that God has made himself known in the farthest reaches of heavens in creation. He's made himself known in the 1,189 chapters of the English Bible. He's made himself known in the principle of human conscience. And when you start to add these things up and we're not done yet, you start to realize, wow, there's no excuse. There's no excuse for living as though there were no God, for denying his existence. There's no excuse for not seeking to know him because he's made it so abundantly clear. Now you go further. You go further, and God has made himself known in Christ. Look at Hebrews 1 with me. Hebrews 1. Hebrews 1. In the words of Francis Schaeffer, there is a God, and he is not silent. There is a God who is there. There is a God who is here, and he has spoken. He is not silent. So in Hebrews 1, beginning in verse 1, we read this, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets." Notice, God spoke. He has made himself known. He has declared himself, and he did so as the writer of Hebrews was writing, he had done it in the completed Old Testament Canon, done it through signs performed by the prophets as well as their spoken word and ministry. But God went further than that. Verse 2, "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." Speaking of the Son in verse 3 it says, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs." God has spoken in Christ. God himself has entered into this world, he walked in human flesh on the very globe upon which we ourselves walk, and for over 30 years he walked and manifested the character and the presence and the nature of God and we have all that we need to know about that recorded for us in the Holy Scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit himself. God has spoken in Christ. You want to know God? Read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and see Christ and realize that as you see Christ in the four gospels declared to you, you are reading about what God is like and God in human flesh. He's spoken, 28 chapters in Matthew, 16 in Mark, 24 in Luke, 21 in John. There's plenty of revelation from God about Christ and in Christ, revealing who God is through what you find written there. John 20:31, you know, "these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing in him you may have life in his name." God has spoken. Whatever else we do today as we cover these principles here, let's exonerate God, if we do nothing else, let's exonerate God from the blasphemous claim that he cannot be known and he hasn't revealed himself in any way that people can find out. That's total bunk, it's total satanic deception, and it's something

that no reasonable person should buy into. God has spoken. He's made himself known in several overlapping and complementary ways.

Now you're in the New Testament. Let's turn for a fifth and final point about the reality of revelation. God has made himself known in the conversion of sinners to Christ. Look at 2 Corinthians 4. 2 Corinthians 4 and to set the context, we will read beginning in verse 1, 2 Corinthians 4:1. The Apostle Paul says, "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." There you go, the conscience. The word of God manifested to the conscience in the sight of God, that's what true biblical ministry is. Not all the programs, not the entertainment, not the personal stories, simply manifesting the word of God clearly and appealing to the conscience of men to respond to it. Ministry is not complicated in that way.

Verse 3, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." Now watch what we see in verse 6 as we talk about God having made himself known, God having revealed himself, God having spoken. This verse is key to the personal appropriation of it, you might say. Verse 6, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." God, through a work of the Holy Spirit and believers, has shined the light of his knowledge, the knowledge of God, into the previously darkened hearts and through the process of conversion has made himself known to those who believe in Christ. The Spirit, through the act of regeneration, the act of new birth, the act of the new creation, those are all synonyms, God makes himself known by saving sinners and making himself known to them in their hearts as the Spirit produces a response to the gospel of Jesus Christ. He's made himself known in conversion. You could, you know, if you viewed it collectively, you could say he's made himself known in the true church of Jesus Christ but for our purposes today, creation, Canon, conscience, Christ, conversion, many overlapping ways, many complementary ways that God has made himself known in a way that just testifies to the abundance of his grace of revealing himself to men who left to their own desires would not even want that revelation.

And so from the beginning of time to the farthest star, from the farthest star to the innermost recesses of the human heart in the conscience and in conversion, and then surpassing all of that in the incarnation, the coming in human flesh of God himself in the person of the lovely Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who supremely revealed the justice and mercy of God as he suffered hanging on that cursed cross some 2,000 years ago, God is known. He's made himself known. From the beginning of time, to the farthest star, to the inner reaches of the heart, to the person of Christ, to the conversion of sinners, God is known, God is known, God is known, God is known, God is known. Now listen, as we're about to see in the second point here, it

does not matter for the purpose of building and having a Christian mind, it does not matter that men stiffen their hearts against that. It does not matter that men stick their spiritual fingers into their spiritual ears and say, "Blah blah blah, I'm not going to listen." That doesn't matter. The reality of revelation is that God has made himself known. He's made himself known abundantly, continuously, since the beginning of time, and in every moment of our existence we are surrounded by the revelation of God making himself known. Period. Full stop. End of story. That's the reality of revelation.

Now, Second point here, the reality of judgment. Now we start to get to where you and I have to think very carefully about the nature of humanity, the nature of human philosophy, the contradictions that men would quickly raise up against everything that I say here and have said here, more importantly, everything that God has revealed, before we can adequately deal with the theme how to know truth exists, beloved, we have to think through what it means that God has made himself known in creation, in the Canon, in conscience, in Christ, and in conversion. What are the implications of that, let's put it this way, from God's perspective? The God who has made himself known and has gone to such great lengths in this revelation, what's the consequence, the implication of that from God's perspective? Well, let's put it this way. Point number two, the reality of judgment and let me kind of build up to this in my ongoing plotting way here this morning. I don't mind plotting at all if it's for your benefit. If a slow approach would help you absorb these things and have your mind anchored in truth so that you could teach your children and your grandchildren truth, and that we could stand as a church against the tides and assaults of Satan against us, if the price to gain that gold, that wonderful goal is to plot a little bit from time to time, man, sign me up for plotting. That's worth it. That's a goal worth attaining and so we go slowly as we say, well, what does all of this mean and what does the outworking of this mean? Remember, we're asking the question here, how do we know that truth exists? All right, how do we know that truth exists? In light of everything that I've just said about the revelation of God, if you're going to write down, if you only want to take one or two pieces of notes here, this would be a place to take a good note. The pursuit of truth does not begin in the human mind. The pursuit of truth does not begin in the human mind. It does not begin in the heart of an intelligent, by human standards, philosopher. It does not begin in the heart and in the feelings of what you and I may think about it or what we may feel as we, you know, as you sit in a deer stand or as you walk on a beach or as you're communing with nature and you're thinking about whatever you think about. It doesn't begin, the pursuit of truth doesn't begin inside the heart and mind of man. It begins someplace else. Follow me here. When you were born, in the day of your mother's travail, to use a term I like to think, I like that term, in the day of your mother's travail, you entered into the world, right? Understand this, when you entered into the world, this is so basic, you entered into the world and you entered into a realm where God had already made himself known. When you were born, all of this was already in place and so you were, as it were, you were ushered in as a guest to the realm that God owns over which Christ is Lord. And so we start with understanding the realm into which we were injected, if I can put it that way, you start there, and that has an immediate impact on the way that the Christian mind properly thinks. It means that you and I don't get to create our own reality. The determination and establishment of truth is not a gift that was given to us for us to decide what we are going to do with it.

You have to start with the fact that you entered into a realm where there was a pre-existing authority into which you were born into subjection, whether you like that or not. You were not given a choice to be born under the subjection of this realm. That's just the way it was. And God had every right to do it that way. If God creates, he gets to do it any way he wants to. And we enter into that realm. We enter into his realm, not our own.

Now, stay with me here, we'll take another plodding step forward. Going back to other things that we've said in the past, God decreed our realm before the beginning of time. He established what the realm of creation, the realm of revelation would be before the beginning of time and then he created the realm right at the starting point of Genesis 1:1, and since Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1, God has sustained the realm that he created based on the purpose that he determined before the foundation of the world. We've covered all of this. This is nothing new. God decreed it before the beginning of time. He created it. Now he sustains it and one day, still future to us, God will consummate it. God will finish it. God will bring it to a conclusion according to what pleases him and what he has revealed and told us in advance would occur. From beginning to end, from eternity to eternity, God is over all. Now, beloved, stay with me here, that is the non-negotiable starting point for answering the question, how do we know that truth exists? You and I have to understand that we cannot know truth or understand our existence whatsoever apart from the God who made us and made everything around us. You can't begin to know truth if you cut God out of the equation of his own creation and of the realm in which you exist. If you start apart from him, you're already in the realm of demonic deception.

Now, with that said, you could picture a rebel, you could picture a state university professor of philosophy puffing on his pipe and looking condescendingly down on us rubes who would believe such things or even worse, teach such things, is what I'm saying here today. Here's what you and I need to understand as we consider the reality of judgment. The reality, and here's the point, you get there eventually when you plod along, God, who has revealed all of this, has not revealed it in a way that leaves it free for us to decide as free agents whether we're going to take it or leave it. We don't have that freedom, not really, when you think about it in the context of everything, because Scripture warns us repeatedly, warns us again and again and again that we have no excuse if we do not receive the revelation of God and this is where it gets rather frightening. This is where the fear of God enters in. You see, in creation, in the Canon, in Christ, in the conscience, in conversion, God isn't simply doing these things without any moral consequence attached to them. We will be held, you and I will be held strictly accountable for how we respond to all of this revelation. What we do with it, God will judge us for and Scripture could not be more clear about this than it is.

Take a little pause here. Somewhere recently, I don't remember where, I read what I thought was a very insightful comment by someone like a Spurgeon or a J. C. Ryle, someone like that, a Martyn Lloyd-Jones, someone of that caliber that said what I'm about to paraphrase, but they said that if we spent as much time preaching the warnings of Scripture as we do the promises of Scripture, the church would be in a much healthier state. If we preached the judgment of God, now I'm expanding, if we preached the

judgment of God as clearly and regularly as we preach the grace of God, there would be a far more balanced perspective and the church of Jesus Christ would be far healthier if it was warned about sin, if it was warned about judgment, if it was called to repent, if it was told as often as it was the promises that everyone likes to hear that there is a judgment prevailing and awaiting us, then maybe there would be something of the fear of God that would come in and cause us to treat all of these things with far greater earnestness than what we do. People get so casual, and I'm even speaking to people that have cycled through here, people get so casual in their handling and in their response to truth, so earthbound in their thinking, so earthbound in their motives, on the presuming on God that either he hasn't really warned us in Scripture or he's not really serious and earnest about the warnings about judgment and wrath that are found so often in the pages of the word of God. And whoever said that, I agree with him. And we have to, look, If we're going to be Christians under the authority of the word of God, if we're going to have a Christian mind, if we're going to respect God and fear God, give him the honor that he deserves, we need to give an equal measure of attention and reverence to his warnings of judgment as we do to our encouragement in the promises of grace that he makes to us because it's all his revelation. If he's our God and if Christ is the one and he is the one who spoke most in Scripture about hell and judgment, how can we claim to love Christ and then cut out a significant portion of his message and just pick and choose that which we want?

I have a friend who well said, and I told him I was going to use his little phrase one day, and here I am doing it. You know, there's so many people that want to say, yeah, I believe in God and I believe in his commandments, but the truth of the matter is that we're just a law unto ourselves and we borrow from God's commandments and God's words when it suits our purposes. We borrow from what God says rather than submitting ourselves to it completely. We pick and choose that which appeals to us. We set aside and ignore the things that do not appeal to us. That ain't on God. That ain't on God. And if we neglect the warnings, then we're without excuse. Men are without excuse.

And so what has God said, beloved, here we go, what has God said about the implications of the revelation that he has made? The implications of the revelation that he has made is the fact that there is judgment attached to the way that we respond to it. So, for example, it says in Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 53:1, "The fool says in his heart there is no God." Scripture judges the one who denies all of this revelation or ignores it and comes up with what he thinks is his lofty, clever approach to life, "I say there's no God." Scripture looks at him and judges him and says, "You're a fool." In Romans 1:20 we read, "For his invisible attributes, namely, God's eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse." That verse comes just two verses after in verse 18 where it says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." All the revelation is there, but they won't acknowledge it, they won't submit it, they just with all of their effort try to suppress it, suppress what's outside speaking to them, what's inside speaking to them. Suppress it, suppress it, close their ears, and the Scripture says they're without

excuse and the wrath of God is upon them. This is the implication of the reality of revelation, there is judgment for rejecting it.

We read from Romans 2, "They show the work of the law written on their hearts, their conflicting thoughts accuse or accuse them when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus." By creation alone, beloved, just on these matters of creation alone, men are without excuse and that's the implication of the reality of revelation. There's a reality of judgment. But going further in biblical revelation, going beyond the principle of creation and the revelation of God in a general way to all men, the gospel itself leaves men without excuse. Look at Matthew 12 with me. Matthew 12, What Jesus says to the cities of his day extends and applies to us as well. Matthew 12, the last two, well not the last two verses of the chapter, verses 41 and 42. We read, and Jesus here is making the point that there were men in the past who were judged or that experienced and knew the revelation of God and now Jesus is here preaching to crowds that rejected him and Jesus says these men who responded to God's truth in the past are going to have a role of judgment in those who heard his words and refused to heed. They heard, but they did not heed and so we read in verse 41, "The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here." The point of the passage is that these people who had lesser revelation in the prophet Jonah and in King Solomon, these people that you can read about in the Old Testament, they responded in repentance and obedience and with a receptive heart to lesser revelation in the person of Jonah and Solomon and yet here these cities in the New Testament are, these men of the contemporaries of Christ, heard his preaching and rejected it and refused to respond and refused to repent. They had greater revelation. They had Christ himself. They had a superior one in front of them, even superior words to what Jonah and Solomon gave and yet they rejected it, and God says the ones who received lesser revelation and responded in faith, they're going to judge those who had greater revelation and yet rejected it. There's no excuse is the point here.

As you're turning in your Bibles, go to Luke 16. In Luke 16, the story of a rich man and Lazarus. A rich man's in Hades. He tells Abraham, "Send them Lazarus and warn my brothers so that they won't come to this place of torment. Warn them, warn them," he says. "I wish I had had warnings that I had heeded before I came to this awful place." Verse 27, I'm presuming that you know the story. Verse 27, the rich man said to Abraham, "Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house--for I have five brothers--so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'" False. Not true. Not true. A resurrected man could walk into a room full of unregenerate people and it would have no effect on them if, as Abraham said in response, verse 31, he said, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead." They have the Scriptures. That's sufficient. And if they won't receive the direct revelation and authority of God as manifested in Scripture, they're not

going to be persuaded by signs and wonders. Signs and wonders of evangelism is directly refuted by this passage. If they won't hear the word of God, judgment is on them and it's not going to help to send lesser forms of revelation if they won't receive the greater form of revelation.

Now move on to Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. Here we go. Hebrews 10 beginning in verse 26. We're talking about how do we know that truth exists and we have said that God has made himself known in many ways, including in Christ, which means in the fullness of the gospel proclamation, God has made himself known. And there's consequence, there's consequence for not receiving and repenting at the sound of the gospel. Scripture has told us in advance. Verse 26, Hebrews 10, "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone," here it is again, principle of Moses, "Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?" In other words, you die if you reject the testimony of Moses, and in Christ there has been presented to you one who is greater than Moses. And if you die in rejection of Moses, how much worse is it going to be if you reject the greater than Moses, the fulfillment of Moses, the prophet who is like Moses that was promised to come, who is God himself in human flesh? If you reject God himself, how much more severe punishment do you think you're going to deserve? It's a matter of an infinite difference of magnitude.

You see, beloved, you see, beloved, what we do week by week as we open the word of God together is something of momentous, eternal consequence and day by day, week by week, you are shaping in your heart either a tender, responsive heart to it, which God promises to bless, or you are hardening yourself in indifference and in a critical spirit and setting yourself up for a judgment that you have no excuse for not seeing it come. These are matters of great eternal consequence. That's just what Scripture says. And the ultimate climax of it all is found in Revelation 20, if you would turn there with me. Revelation 20, where we read, looking forward to a time still future to us, God gave this revelation to Christ, Christ gave it to an angel who gave it to John, who gave it to the churches, and here we are receiving it here today. "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done." Okay, there we go. How you live and respond to truth in this life has eternal consequences. It's laid out plainly in Scripture. No one can claim after today that's in this room or hears it on subsequent media, no one can claim that no one told you. "They were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." With the devil and all of his demons to be their eternal abode for time without end.

The reality of creation, the reality of the gospel carries with it an implicit warning of judgment based on how you do or do not respond and that brings us to our third and final point here this morning, the response to revelation and judgment. The response to revelation and judgment. And here's my point, I said that we were going to plod along to make one major point. Here's that major point that we are making. We, speaking as humanity in general, let's say, speaking as humanity in general, we must believe in the revelation of God under pain of wrath and judgment for failure to do so. We must believe in the revelation of God under pain of wrath and judgment for failure to do so. You see, this isn't just some kind of simple multiple choice test that has no real consequence. This isn't one of those games, forgive me please for the very modest illustration that I'm about to give, this isn't one of those games where a guy with quick hands has three cups in front of you, one of them has a ball and he mixes them up really fast and then you're supposed to choose which one has the ball under it. This isn't that kind of game where there's no real consequence to the outcome, except maybe you put a dollar down and you're trying to win five or something. It's not like that. This is not a game. This is what every man, woman, boy, and girl must respond to, and to neglect it or to reject it is to leave yourself with no outcome but eternal judgment and the abiding wrath of God for your failure to believe. There's no excuse. That's the whole point of all of those passages of judgment. There is no excuse for this.

Now if you go to Acts 17, Acts 17, the Apostle Paul speaking to unbelievers in Athens who were religious but who did not know God, he says in verse 22, we're going to read an extended stretch here. "So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: 'Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: "To the unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.'" See, their own conscience testified to them that there was a God that they were responsible to.

Verse 24, "The God who made the world and everything in it," there he is, the God of creation, "being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." We live in his realm, Paul is saying. This is his realm and he permeates it and he gives us everything pertaining to life, breath, and everything that's necessary for it.

Verse 26, "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place." He decreed it in advance. He's working it out by his providence. Verse 27, here you go, "that they should seek God, in the hope that they might find their way toward him and find him, yet he's actually not far from each one of us." He says, God's done all of this, you're in his realm, and the point of being in his realm is that you might seek him and find him. That is your responsibility even if you in your own depraved, unregenerate heart don't have the power to do it, you are responsible to seek him in light of all of the revelation that he has given. There's no excuse not to do that, not to make that the burning, surpassing, first priority of the entirety of your life. It's time for the games to

stop and all of the excuses and all of the selfish, personally oriented, other priorities to take the subordinate right place underneath this surpassing responsibility.

Verse 28, "for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'" Verse 29, "Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." A fixed day of judgment decreed from before the beginning of time is coming, at which time we will all be judged for what we have done in response to this revelation in creation, in the Canon, in conscience, in Christ, and in conversion.

Now beloved, let me wrap all of this up for you and kind of set the stage for the next time we come back to this theme in two or three weeks. This is the drop-dead issue for our age and it is the drop-dead issue for your own soul. How do we know truth exists? How do we know truth exists? My beloved friends, the first word from your mouth in response to that question is of vast eternal significance, and it exposes what's real in your heart as you sit here today. The first word out of your mouth is of eternal significance. How do we know truth exists? The first word out of your mouth exposes what you hold as the authority. The first word out of your mouth in response to the question, how do we know truth exists, exposes your entire view of authority. If someone says, "Well I think...", they've just exposed themselves as saying, "I'm the authority here. I think," and then they just go on and fulminate and ruminate about whatever they cogitate. Someone that starts from that point, that what I think determines the matter, they've strayed. How does the Christian mind answer that question? How do we know truth exists? We start with a different word. We start with an independent word. We start with a word that has nothing to do with us. How do we know truth exists? God. God has spoken. God has made himself known.

And so, you see, beloved, the fact that we are in his realm means that we have to live in submission to his realm and that our mind has to realize that we are not independent agents. We live in a realm where God has spoken and thus the title of today's message, "God and Truth: In That Order." We start with God and then we know the existence of truth from the being and the existence and the revelation of God himself. In other words, we believe and we know truth in response to him, not apart from him. We believe and we know truth exists in response to God in whose realm we live, not apart from him. And so, you know, you go back into all of the so-called great thinkers of the world since the development of rationalism and all of those philosophers that have directed human thought without reference to God, understand, beloved, that everything that they say, that the thrust of their position when they start from a position other than the revelation of God, understand that their whole position is false by definition. It is rebellious by definition because knowing truth begins with submitting to the revelation of God, the prior revelation of God. The revelation of God, then the response comes, and there's no escape from that, and there's no excuse for not doing it that way. And those who say,

"That's not the way I'm going to do it," are retreating further and further into darkness. As the revelation of God and as the servants of God plead with them and call on them, "Come to the truth, come to Christ," as men harden their hearts against that, they retreat deeper and deeper into darkness and ever-increasing judgment.

Scripture lays before us the crossroads of our existence at a time like this. In 2 Thessalonians, you don't need to turn there, I'll just read it for the sake of time. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9 through 12 we read, "The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing," mark this, "because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." It's really stunning. to grasp something of the implications of what we're saying here. God has made himself known. He judges those who reject it. And here we are faced with our own hearts and lives laid open.

Beloved, how do you know truth exists? Beloved, those of you that have resisted up until now, maybe young people growing up in Christian families, well, that happens a lot, doesn't it? Will you ignore the warning signs, the warning texts of Scripture to your own destruction? Why would you do that? Why would you possibly do that? Why would you save your pride and sacrifice your soul? Let me encourage you to humble your heart, to ask the Spirit of God for help, and to receive the truth in Christ so that you may be saved. How do you know truth exists? Answer well, my friends. Answer very, very well, because God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world.

Let's pray together.

Gracious Father, may you send your Spirit to enlighten many eyes in this dark age of sin. Father, may you enlighten the eyes and minds of the unbelieving in our midst, especially, Father, those born and raised in Christian homes, perhaps playing the part of the hypocrite. Father, may your Spirit shake them to the core, humble them out of their pride and hypocrisy that they might turn to Christ and be saved. For all of us, Father, may you grant us complete, unqualified submission and trust in Christ and to all your revealed truth. To the honor and glory of your holy name we pray. Amen.

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