



## **In the Fullness of Time**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Well, Merry Christmas. We are, of course, dealing with the birth of Christ. We can't help but do that this week. But every time I study the narratives of the birth of Christ in Matthew and in Luke, I can't help but spend time pondering John the Baptist because, of course, their birth stories are intertwined. And John the Baptist even in that interesting passage where they meet prenatally. I mean, there's just so much that is twisted together in the biblical story, both in prophecy and in history, of John the Baptist and Jesus, relatives. And of course, as they grow up, John the Baptist becomes this very essential figure of being the agency of Jesus' baptism there in the Jordan River. He's there to witness this miraculous sign that God shows to all the people standing by after the baptism of the endowment of God's Spirit upon Christ, He becomes this huge advocate pointing everybody to Christ, the champion of Christ. He says those great things like, "I must decrease, he must increase." John the Baptist, is just a key figure in all of this. And that's what makes Luke Chapter 7 and Matthew Chapter 11 such a strange set of words in our ears when we read them. In our reading through the Bible, we run into him asking the question, "Are you the one that is to come, or should we expect another?" Is there someone else?

And that line there both Luke 7 and Matthew 11, it makes us scratch our heads and think, wow, John the Baptist seems like this towering strong figure who knows exactly what's going on. I mean, he seems to know Scripture really well and all of a sudden now it's like you're doubting that. You're questioning that. He seems so fickle in that passage. Like, what do you mean? Why would you ask such a question? If you ever scratched your head at that, you know that passage I'm talking about. Let's look at one of them, Matthew 11 is one record of it. And I think one of the hints as to why it's embedded right in the text itself in the context of him asking the question in Matthew 11, there it sits in verses 2 and 3, and we learn why he's asking the question. He's asking it for some very reasonable things.

And I just want to contend, even before we read the question, for John the Baptist. I believe that he is, I mean, obviously Jesus hails him as such a great figure in the biblical narrative. Of course, I advocate for him. I would even say this morning you need to think that he knew the Scriptures really, really well. He knew what to expect when it comes to the Messiah. And yet he asked this question because of two words in verse 2. Let's take a look at it in Matthew 11 verse 2. This is such an important text of Scripture that I think all of us can identify with on some level. "Now when John heard." What are the next two words? No one looked in the Bible this morning? Do you see it? Your Bible's in English here, right? "When John heard." What are the next two words? "In prison." "When John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent words by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come?'" That's a reference to the Christ, to the Messiah of the Old Testament. Are you that one? "Or shall we look for another?"

Well, the clue is embedded right there in those two words. John is asking this question in prison. The prison in the Transjordan over in what is modern-day Jordan today. And he is there suffering in prison at the heavy hand of the political leaders. And by the way, how does



that end for him, Sunday school grads? How does that end for John the Baptist in prison? He loses his head. And that's not figurative. He gets decapitated, you know, at a party his head gets brought in on a platter. It does not end well for him. And I don't know if he can see clearly the foreboding, dark clouds of this storm of persecution coming toward him. But it is not going well because John is, two words, "in prison."

Let me contend this way for John. John knew **WHAT** to expect when it came to the Messiah. He just didn't know **WHEN** to expect it. And that is the theologically very important, deep and yet essential doctrine of the Christian life that we cannot miss when it comes to Christmas time every single year and we start talking about the coming of Christ. We better know something about the promises of God and not only what they are going to be in the fulfillment of Christ coming to the world, but when they'll be. And that's essential. Let's just put it this way. I think John knew well, let's just talk about the book of Isaiah. I think he knew the book of Isaiah and he knew that him being in prison under the political persecution unjustly of a political leader in the first century didn't sync well with the lines we heard our kids singing on this platform last week. "And the government will be upon his shoulders." Right?

In those great four labels that were to be applied to the Messiah that this "child is born unto us, a son has been given unto us: and the government shall rest on his shoulders," here are these four titles, and then it says, "the expanse of his government, the extent of his government will know no end." Now I'm thinking if that's the guy I've been the number one cheerleader for all this time, I'm thinking I've got a real tight relationship with the King of kings and Lord of lords, what am I doing in prison? And it isn't looking good like I'm going to get out of this with my head. So what's going on here? "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

He knew not only Isaiah 9, he knew Isaiah 33, that he was going to come with his strong arm. He's going to lead. Or how about Isaiah 40? Right? "The glory of God is going to be revealed," when the Lord, when the Christ comes, "and all flesh will see it together." Everyone's going to recognize the King of kings and Lord of lords. And he's there under the hand of political powers being unjustly persecuted and eventually murdered, killed, executed. And he's going, "Are you the one?" Are you the one? You need to get in the sandals of John the Baptist and say, I get it, John, I get it. He could quote all of those passages but you, I hope, with 20-20 hindsight, looking back now at the life of Christ and knowing all that happened, including going up to Jerusalem to be persecuted and mistreated at the hands of the scribes and the Pharisees and executed on a Roman cross. I think you know that when you go into the book of Romans and you think about the coming of Christ, you should move pretty quickly from Chapters 9, 33 and 40 and get to Isaiah 53 and say, I know there are some things there that ought to capture our attention.

And, John, even when he says, "He's the lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world," I know you know these verses. I know you know that his life is going to be offered as a guilt offering to atone for the sins of many. I think you know that he's going to be persecuted and afflicted. He's going to be "crushed." We're going to consider him "despised" and "stricken." I think you know that the coming Messiah is going to be one like "one from whom men hide



their faces." Now, where did John the Baptist put that in his brain when it comes to thinking about the Christ is here? I mean, I think he knew Malachi Chapter 3 and Malachi Chapter 4, and he knew that he was the forerunner. He was the "voice of the one crying in the wilderness" saying "make way for the Lord." Here he comes.

Here comes the Lord, the great majestic Lord coming with toenails and kneecaps and eyelashes. Here comes the incarnate God. And he knew he was the voice saying, "Here he is, here he is, here he is." He's pointing everybody's attention. "I've got to decrease, he must increase." Here he is. And I'm in prison. I just think you need to sympathize with the pain and even the concern. Did we miss something here? Now the very learned Apostle Paul later looks at all this and he knows now, of course, he's got the benefit of hindsight and he's got the benefit of revelation coming from God's Spirit to give him insight to say this was a mystery. It was not previously foretold, this period of time where God's going to build this thing called the Church and Gentiles are going to be brought in. And Paul got it. But the apostles didn't get it right away.

In Acts Chapter 1 they're standing there on the Mount of Olives, and they might have even been thinking, I mean, let's just say they're fishermen I know, they weren't Paul. They didn't study at the feet of Gamaliel. They didn't have all the training in seminary, but I think they'd read Zachariah 14. They'd heard it read to them, and they knew that one day the Lord was going to put his feet on the Mount of Olives and it was going to split open, and they were standing there on the Mount of Olives, Acts Chapter 1. And they asked an obvious question that you and I would ask, and that is, "Is now the time you're going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" You're the king, right? You're the king. We're worshiping you. Are you going to do it now? And his response was, do you know it? "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons set by the Father in his own authority." It's time for you to get to work. "You'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem," right here, right across the valley, "in Judea," the region, "Samaria," up north and the whole world, "to the end of the earth." So get to work.

And off he went. And I'm like what happened here? We have an intervening time. And three decades later, Paul is going mystery, mystery, time of mystery here, this time where we didn't foresee it. And even John the Baptist cannot be faulted for saying, well, the coming of Christ, it should mean this. And in fact, it just meant this. And even as I said last week, a little devotional at the end of the musical. Right? It was first things first for Christ, which was to solve the problem of sin, the suffering servant. Even in the passage it says he'll somehow "see his offspring." He's going to have this group of spiritual children, the sons who will inherit the kingdom, and he will see them, he will interact with them, and God will make the will of the Father "prosper in his hand." He's going to see the light of life. How is the dead person crushed and dying as a guilt offering in Isaiah 53 ending in the last verse of being alive and "making intercession for many transgressions." How does that work? It's called the resurrection. All of that foretold.

The problem is, I don't know where John the Baptist filed it, probably where you file a lot of verses you really don't get like, "I don't know, somehow God is going to do that. I don't get it. But let's get to these verses. These verses are great." And I think John the Baptist knew



everything that should be expected of the Messiah. He just did not know when to expect it. He thought it was all now. I say it every Christmas in one way or another. But one year I said I'm going to preach just on this one truth that we cannot think about the first coming of Christ without thinking about the second coming of Christ. Because though John didn't know it, though everyone there, even the apostles in Acts Chapter 1, they didn't get it. The eleven stood there not getting it. Is now the time? It would make sense now. I guess I know where to file Isaiah 53. Right? You died, you suffered, you rose again. Well, now's the time? It's not for you to know the times.

So I'm leaving. And the angels say, "You saw him go." He says, "I'm going to come back." That's all the talk about Jesus saying, "If I go away, I'm going to come back and receive you to myself, that where I am you may be also." All that's going to come true. But you just need to know it's not now. I know we unfortunately conflate a lot of things on our platform, especially with the kid's music, we conflate a lot of things that John the Baptist conflated that made him think, "Is this all it's cracked up to be?" Because we say "and the government will rest upon his shoulder." We even sing some songs that conflate these truths. And we think, well, where is it? Well, it's not now. Because the work of Christ did not take place in one advent. It takes place in two advents and while there is a whole set of messianic prophecies that are now completed in the first coming, there's a whole other set coming in the second coming. And you and I need to know we live between those advents and we should recognize something about the second advent based on the first advent. And it all really starts with the fact that when God makes a promise he keeps it.

So let's look at Galatians Chapter 4 verse 4. And as you're turning there, I didn't want to make this the world's longest introduction, but it will be at least up in the top five. So I told you to turn to Galatians 4, but let me at least say this as you put your finger there or you're in your devices, this is easy for you to get around. Go to First Corinthians 4. I know, I'm extending the introduction. We have no service after this. So there are no limits here on this. Don't clap. The kid's ministry would have my head on a platter. (audience laughing) Metaphorically, I hope.

Let's turn to First Corinthians 4 and let me just tell you this, the conflation continues. John's theology was corrected. Not that his theology was bad. He just needed to figure out this timing thing. And Paul got it and he was writing about it a few decades later. But the Corinthians, and I've often said this, the Corinthian culture is the Orange County of the ancient world at an important crossroads on an isthmus. It was just the place where the money settled in. People had nice houses, good views, they had great transportation. They were looking good in their fine robes and their wives were all looking good. It was just, I mean, it was pretty tucked away and pretty, pretty good. I mean, life still was life, but they were doing financially pretty well. People were living pretty well.

And some of them embraced Christ. They start looking at the blessings in their culture and they're like, "Ahh, there it is." And Paul's got some corrections here. And let me just say, his chiding and shaming of these Christians in this passage is dripping with sarcasm. If I brought Paul back to this earth, it would be what he would say to every prosperity preacher. Well, he'd say some other things to prosperity preachers. Everybody who goes to the prosperity

churches he'd have this to say because there's a conflation of the expectation with what Messiah was to do right happening in Corinth. So to the extent that we see this problem continue, I want to at least address it here in this passage and then we'll get to Galatians 4.

First Corinthians Chapter 4, drop down to verse 8. He says to them, there's a lot of sarcasm here, "Already you have all you want!" Do you see that? What comes after? What's the punctuation? An exclamation point. "You already have all you want!" I mean, this is a strong statement about something that, by the way, is not true, but they're wanting it to be true. And just like a lot of people at your prosperity churches that you know, they act like they got everything, but they don't have everything. Matter of fact, they may have a lot of the trappings of external good stuff, but in reality they don't have what they ultimately desire. I mean, they got more than you got. I get that. A lot of them do. Certainly the leaders of the organizations do, flying around in their private jets. But the reality is they don't have it. They don't have all they want. They want more. "Already you have all you want! Already you've become rich!"

Here are two words that threw them off. Without us. "Without us you've become kings!" Now had they? No, of course they're not kings. Of course they're not really rich the way they want to be. They don't have all they really want. But he's saying, you got all this, you got all this. You're saying like you got all this. "And would that you did reign." Look at that phrase. "Would that you did reign." You don't reign. You think you're reign. You're trying to pretend you're reigning. "That we might share the rule with you!" Because you know what? When you're reigning, we'll be reigning, but you're not reigning. You just happened to be in an insulated part of the ancient world. Because you're not reigning. Because the first coming did not guarantee that the people of God would reign. And you're a little bit like the confused John the Baptist.

Matter of fact, they might be more intentionally against the realities of what God has expected us to do by looking at certain verses and saying, yeah, you just like these verses, you don't like those. You don't like verses like when Jesus said, and surely these sayings were going around at this particular time in Corinth, that Jesus said, "Hey, if they hated me, they're going to hate you. If they persecuted me, they'll persecute you. If the world is not on my side, it's not going to be on your side. So just know that." But the problem with prosperity-insulated people in well-endowed parts of the culture in any given generation is that they often start tucking their Christianity back into the privatization of their faith to where they can start to keep up all the things that they've got going on, and in fact, they're really not on the front lines of any evangelistic work. They're really not being persecuted because they're not really standing up for Christ.

And he says, "I would that you were reigning." Oh, that you were. Because if you were reigning, "we'd be reigning" But really, look at us. We're the missionaries on the front lines. Look at verse 9, "For I think that God has exhibited us apostles," who are really on the front lines, we're writing Scripture, we're out there preaching, traveling the world, "as last of all," like we're last of all, "like men sentenced to death," in some big parade. Here we are chained up with chains dragging us through the streets "because we've become a spectacle to the world."



I mean, they're hissing and jeering at us, "and to angels," to principalities and powers, "and to men."

Matter of fact, here's what we're considered, "We are fools," in this world, "for Christ's sake." Because Christ said they thought he was Beelzebub. Certainly what are they going to make of his followers? Of course, we're being disparaged because we're associated with Christ. "Oh, but you are wise in Christ. Oh, we're weak. Oh, but you're so strong. You're held in honor, but us in disrepute." We're supposed to be on the cutting edge of this thing. We are out there on the front lines. We're being let down in a basket outside the walls of Damascus. Where there are people in Asia Minor throwing rocks at us and leaving us for dead. We're getting broken bones, bruised contusions, cuts on our face. That's what we're doing when we're out there advancing the cause of Christ. And you guys are insulated in your nice little neighborhoods. You got your view, you got your nice clothes, your closet is full of nice clothes.

And he says, you guys, you think this is it? You think as First Timothy Chapter 6 says that godliness is a means to great gain, and by that you mean material wealth. That's not for this age. You're conflating the reality of what God promised and it's not for now. Because look at us just like today. It's much like the websites you might occasionally go to about the persecuted church around the world, and we can just put on the blinders and go, "Wow, really hard there. I guess Satan's really at work over there. I'm glad that my Christianity is making me the employee of the month and the head of my homeowner's association. I'm empowered." Verse 11, "To the present hour," you want to talk about us, "we're hungry, thirsty, poorly dressed, buffeted, homeless, we labor, working with our own hands." We're reviled and "When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when we're slandered, we entreat," we beg. "We've become, and still are, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things."

Now, who else was the scum of the world in his generation just a few decades earlier? Jesus Christ. They put him on a cross. They beat him up. They mocked him. They put a crown of thorns on his head. "You're king. Here's your crown." They spit on him and they hoisted him up on a Roman execution rack and they brought all their family members by and their teenager and said, "Look at that guy." They made fun of him as he hung there completely naked on a cross, humiliated in shame. And he says we stand with him. Do you think you've arrived? Oh, that you were reigning because we would be reigning with you. Oh, that you were ruling. Oh, that you were kings, but not yet.

I don't want us to play the game the Corinthians played by looking back at the first coming of Christ and saying, "We got it all." That's what we call an over-realized eschatology. It's only over-realized in our minds. And it's only made possible in the fantasy, in the prosperity gospel, or even for us as Bible-believing Christians in a nice part of the world because we don't happen to be suffering. We don't happen to be suffering the way a lot of Christians are around the world. But do not fall to the fantasy. There's no promise of that. And maybe I'm preaching to a crowd right now where the fissures of the protection and insulation of evangelical Christianity in the 21st century is starting to erode enough for you to start to say, well, maybe



it isn't going to hold up for us here. Maybe this post-World War II life of like it's okay to be a Christian, maybe it's not okay anymore. Maybe we will be persecuted. Maybe we will be buffeted. Maybe we will go hungry. Maybe we will lose our job. Maybe we won't be popular.

And of course, if we just continue to be silent and we don't stand up for Christ, the reason you're getting along great with all your coworkers is because you're not talking about Christ, right? I mean, I can see where maybe you have been challenged enough in the last year to do for God what he asks you to do. You're starting to say, I don't think it's going to work out very well here. And then we get to Christmas. We look back to the first coming and say where is it all? Where are all the promises of Isaiah 9, Isaiah 33, Isaiah 40? I don't see it. Where is it? We have to separate the two comings, Galatians 4.

How long was that introduction? 20 minutes? Okay. Galatians 4, thankfully, it's a short verse, but let's read it together and I know the verse says Galatians Chapter 4 verse 4, and you see it on your worksheet there. It's just a tiny little sentence and you'll say, well, it's really not a whole sentence, you better add verse 5. But we're not going to add verse 5. We'll read verse 5. It's the context, I get it. But we talk about that all the time. I want to use this as a platform to say, if this verse is true, what else is true? In the first part I want to focus on is just verse 4, which is the first half of the sentence, let's read the whole sentence, Galatians Chapter 4 verses 4 and 5 but we're going to focus on verse 4.

"But when the fullness of time had come, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son," past tense. Paul's writing here to the Galatians churches, and he's saying, guys, it's happened. God had a timetable and when it was ready he pulled the trigger and he dispatched Christ into the body of a young teenage girl in Nazareth. And then he got her down to Bethlehem and had that baby born according to the prophecies of Scripture "in the fullness of time." Good? "Born of a woman." Well, wait a minute. He's the Son of God "sent forth his Son, born of a woman." Seems like he'd be the woman's son. Well, what's going on here? Well, that was the sermon two weeks ago. I hope you were here for the sermon in Colossians. Right?

The second person of the Triune God. The Godhead. Right? Two natures. He was the Son of God. And he was the son of a woman "born of a woman, born under the law." Right? He had to keep the law. Verse 5, "To redeem those under the law." What does redemption mean? To buy them out from a problem because under the law, you and I are transgressors of the law. So we have a problem. "The wages of sin is death." We should be punished. We should be punished by a holy and righteous God. But we need to be pulled out of that. If we have any hope, we need to be pulled out of that situation. I need somehow a new law, the law of the Spirit and life, to quote the book of Romans, to somehow overcome and overrule the law of sin and death because that's my problem. I live as a sinner and I should die, I should be separated from God.

But he was born into the law because he was going to fulfill the laws, Romans says, so that you and I could be redeemed. "To redeem those under the law." The law. I'm subject to God's law. But I need to be freed from it "so that we might receive adoption as sons." The sons are



the inheritors of the Father's wealth, inheritors of the Father's property. That they might inherit the earth. That we might have the place of blessing. How do we get that? Well, I'm a sinner. I need to be redeemed from under the law. Okay. You know all that. We talk about it all the time. Verse 4, though, let's focus on this as a paradigm. Here's the equation. Here's the paradigm. "In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son."

Could Jesus have been born 100 years earlier than he was? No. A hundred years later? No. A year later? No. A year earlier? No. A century earlier? No. A century later? No. J. Warner Wallace had come and preached that sermon, gave you that book, many people bought it, Person of Interest. And it talked so much about the coalescence of all the things that made the birth of Christ just the right time. So good, so helpful. It's on the back of your worksheet if you don't have the book. Helpful to get that in our mind. Perfect. It couldn't have been more perfect. And it's not as though God was leaning over the rails of heaven with his, you know, his chin on his fist going, I wonder when they going to get those roads built in Rome. Right? I can't wait for the language to get so technical that we can really transfer this great technical New Testament doctrine in Koine Greek.

I mean, that's not it. It's that God had this all planned including everything that went with it. And all the promises relate to God's plan and purpose. And he was all mapping that out to make it happen. And then back when we in the timeline heard about it in the Old Testament here was the promise, "I will do this." And it says everything about the first coming of Christ clearly laid out, including where he'd be born, Micah Chapter 5 verse 2. He'd be born in a village outside of the main capital of Israel, a place called Bethlehem, which was just a little village about eight miles from Jerusalem. But he would be called Nazirite. He'd be called a Nazarene from up north. He would be growing up in Hicksville, up north, where they have an accent. Well, he's got to now have a mother born of a woman up there. So he impregnates her by putting this child inside of this mother, utilizing this miracle that we call the virgin birth, to have now a kid who is going to grow up up north who's going to be born in a village south of Jerusalem. Well, the whole orchestration of the taxation and the census, make all this work, the promises of God "in the fullness of time."

And the fullness of time he even gave us a preview of that back in Daniel Chapter 9. He tells the story about the seventy weeks prophecy and at the 69 weeks the Messiah was going to be cut off. Cut off? When is it going to start? Well, at the decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem. Well, there were four decrees that took place. Well, the one we're talking about in that passage is Artaxerxes' decree in 444 B.C. And when that takes place, if you add up all those weeks which represent years and those seven sets of years of 480 years, it gets us to the place of 33 A.D. when Jesus was cut off and crucified. Even the time frame was laid out in the Bible. That's why Jesus could look at them and say you can read the weather, you know the red sky in the morning you know it's going to be bad weather. But you can't perceive the times now? Don't you know that God had promised all this and now it's here? The promises of God, they all came to fruition in the birth of Christ, but all of them were not fulfilled. Only a bunch of them that related to our redemption.





Okay, Let me give you a first point, finally. Did I give you a first point? And you're going to say you went to seminary for this? I don't even believe it. It's so simple. Can you please write it down? Because I don't think it's cemented in crazy glued to our brain the way it needs to be. Number one, you need to realize "God Keeps His Promises." Hold back your applause. Don't stand up. I know that's genius right there. Wow. If I asked you getting out of the car, camera, microphone, "Do you believe God keeps his promises?" You'd probably go, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, sure. Yeah. I believe that." Do you believe that God keeps his promises, that he's a good communicator, that he communicates his promises clearly, and that he keeps those promises precisely as he said he would do it? Absolutely.

Now, when we conflate everything to the first coming of Christ, sadly, we take the promises that are clear, like how long it was going to take from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity to the birth of Christ, where he would be born, that he be born the line of Judah, Second Samuel Chapter 7, the Covenant. You can say all of that. It all worked out just right. And then there was a bunch of promises that didn't seem to get worked out. But we'll just spiritualized those and make those kind of just, I don't know, they're not literal.

I'm saying everything that God promised, including the government resting on the shoulders of the Messiah and the lion laying down with the lamb and all the tribute coming to Jerusalem and him ruling and reigning on the throne of his father, David, All of it is literally true because everything about the first coming of Christ was literally true. And then we start to realize there's a gap. "Is now the time you're going to restore the Kingdom of Israel?" Acts Chapter 1. He didn't say, guys, it's a spiritual set of promises. Don't you get it? This is all there is. I mean, you'll have Sunday school classes. That'll be cool. You'll have the ethics to raise your kids by. Maybe it will help keep them off of drugs. I got a lot for you here in this epic, but it's not me literally sitting on a throne. He didn't say that. He said, "It's not for you to know the times or the seasons."

I'm not telling you when it's going to happen. It's going to happen, but just look back at the first coming "in the fullness of time," God pulled the trigger on sending Christ into the world. He accomplished the redemptive work that all of us believe. Right? And then he said, I got more to do. And Jesus kept saying it, "I'm coming back." I'm coming back. When you see, the Olivet Discourse, "when you see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with the angels" and the glory of his Father, "then he will come and he will sit on his glorious throne and he will gather all the nations," all the people before him, "and he will separate peoples" into two groups "like a shepherd separates sheep from the goats." Absolutely true.

Jesus kept saying, I know I've come now, but "if I go, I'll go and prepare a place for you. And when I come again, I'll receive you to myself, that where I am you may be also." Every single liberal church, every church that has departed from biblical orthodoxy that no longer believes literally the promises of God does not believe in a literal return of Christ. They don't believe it. They don't believe he's coming. And if you start talking to your neighbors about this, they might think you're weird too. They're thinking, "You mean that guy in the Bible? You mean he really kind of, like, took off, like, got teleported up, like on a Star Trek episode and he left and he's going to come back? Do you really believe that Jesus, like, how is he breathing in this



weird dimension that he's in right now? Do you really believe that? Do you believe he's got toenails and fingernails? Are you telling me he's going to come back with two front teeth, this Jesus of the Bible?" Go tell your neighbor about it.

I know this has been an embarrassment to higher academia and learning, and people say, "Oh, you don't really believe that. You don't believe the virgin birth. You don't believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. You don't believe these promises are true. You don't believe Jesus is coming back." And we're saying right here in the 21st century, at Compass Bible Church, "Yes, we believe that. It's our only hope. That's all we have."

Let me take you to a text of Scripture. Ephesians Chapter 1. You have to believe the future promises that have yet to be inaugurated and fulfilled because you believe the past promises and those are inarguable. You cannot argue. It is indisputable that Jesus did what the promises of the Old Testament said he would do, at least half of them. And it's not as though God just couldn't get the job done. It's that he's going to get the job done in two installments. Ephesians Chapter 1, and this is the reason why. Because God is sovereign. That's a great word. He's in charge and able to do what he plans and purposes. Let's just jump into the middle of verse 11. Start with the word "according." Do you see the word "according" in the middle of verse 11? Just start reading there. We'll get the whole context but let's start there. "According to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will." It's good to know someone who has a purpose and a plan.

Matter of fact, I hope you appreciate people whom you know, who have a purpose and a plan. That's a good thing. And anybody who admires people who have purposes and plans and they start to accomplish those plans, that's only because you're made of the image of God and that we stand back and say, that's a good thing. That's a transcendent reality. We are made an image of God to do the same thing that God does. The problem is I can't work everything after the counsel of my will. I couldn't get my kids to make their beds when they were growing up. I can't control things. God controls things all the way down to where the Messiah would be born, when he would be born, how he would be raised and what he would do, and all the suffering that Isaiah 53 talks about. Everything. God accomplishes it all because "he works everything after the counsel of his own will," what he wants, what he plans, what he purposes he gets done.

Now let's start in verse 7. Go back to verse 7 of Ephesians Chapter 1. "In him," in Christ, "we have redemption." That was the whole point of Galatians Chapter 4. He came the first coming to redeem all of us who were under the law. We're under the law. The law said, you sin, you get death, you get punishment. But we're redeemed from that. Now we have that redemption. We're not subject to the punishment of God that we deserve, the condemnation of God we don't get. Why? "Through his blood." He died. He absorbed the punishment of all that. And what does that mean? The release or the "forgiveness of our trespasses." I've sinned, you've sinned. We could all put your sins up on the screen if we had a way to do that and show how everyone in this room is a filthy sinner in one way or another. Some are worse than others but we're sinners. But we've been released from all of that "according to the riches of his grace." You didn't deserve it. I don't deserve it. But we got it. "He lavished it upon us." He poured it on



top of our lives, "lavished it upon us, in all wisdom and insight." He knew exactly what he was doing. Every single thing he did he did it with "wisdom and insight."

And he was "making known to us the mystery of his will." A lot of the stuff we didn't understand, like "You're leaving now? We're not just setting up a kingdom now. No, we're leaving." "According to the purpose which he set forth in Christ." Now, here's our phrase from Galatians 4:4 repeated again and I want you to catch the context and where this is heading, the object of it. "A plan for the fullness of time." We're talking now in a future tense, "a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." In heaven they're still having boardroom meetings like they had in Job Chapter 1. It is not all working out the way that you would expect it to work out if God has vanquished his enemies and expelled them into outer darkness. And on earth, don't even get me started on how your news headlines do not match all things being united in Christ. I can't get my neighbor to think positively about Christianity, let alone being united in Christ.

So this hasn't happened yet. "A plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth in him." Now we look past tense and this may confuse you but keep reading. "In him we've obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all thing after the counsel of his will." So he works all things after the counsel of his will. And we've obtained an inheritance. Now, that's a tricky theological phrase, "we've obtained an inheritance." Have you obtained an inheritance? I thought the whole thing was this inheritance we're supposed to experience, and we're supposed to obtain it. Well, in what sense have you obtained it? Well, the inheritance you've got is a redemptive inheritance now, which means you no longer are guilty for your sins. You might even feel the release of that. It's called guilt being vanquished by the grace of God. And you say, now I am a card-carrying member of the kingdom. I now am a kingdom citizen. My citizenship is in heaven.

Here's the problem. You're not there. And heaven hasn't yet arrived on earth when the "dwelling place of God will be among men," to quote the end of the Bible. That hasn't happened yet. You've obtained an inheritance only in the sense that you are a legal card-carrying member of the kingdom. But the kingdom has yet to arrive. We still do not have all things united in Christ. Certainly not all things on earth. And you can argue not all things in heaven. It is like First Corinthians 15 says one day when it's all done, including death itself has been vanquished, then Christ can hand the kingdom over to the Father, but it's not now. And so we are living in this gap. The redemptive purpose of God is yet to be accomplished in the second coming. It has to require the second coming, which you have to believe literally or we have no hope. And in this, it says you've obtained the inheritance only insofar as you qualified for it.

How do I know that? Because I keep reading and I read the word h-o-p-e in verse 12, "so that we who were first to hope," to hope, "in Christ." Hope is a word. Romans 8 makes very clear about a future, something that I've yet to obtain. I have not obtained it yet. Hope. I have been the first to hope. I hope in Christ. What? That he came the first time and I can have Christmas and quote Isaiah 9? No. What I hope in is the forgiveness that was accomplished through his



blood so I don't any longer have sin appended to my account in heaven. But I do not have the completion of the hope that Christ offers, and that is to be an inheritor of the kingdom. I don't have that. I'm waiting for that. That's what hope is. It's waiting. And we might be "first be to the praise of his glory. In him you also," verse 13, read it carefully, "heard the word of truth," we're looking back now in your testimony, "the gospel of your salvation, and you trusted in him." I love the preposition "in him." My trust, my belief, my confidence was in him. And what happened when that took place on the timeline of my testimony? Well, then I was sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. I was sealed.

So Spirit came as weird as that sounds, my relationship with the third person of the Godhead now started to convict me of sin, it brings comfort, it gives me a sense of relief from guilt. All the things that we have in this interface with the third person of the Spirit. As awkward as that sometimes is in terms of imperfection, still, I have a relationship with God, "who is," I love this now if you had any doubts about the future focus of this passage, "who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it." So, question. Have I inherited and obtained in marriage? Only insofar as I'm a card carrying-member of the Kingdom. I have yet to obtain the inheritance. That's what Romans 8 is all about. You're all embattled, you're all embattle. You're all being persecuted. Nero and eventually Diocletian and you guys are going to hide in the catacombs in Rome as the Roman church. And Paul says, the whole point is we have an indomitable savior who's going to bring us into the fruition of the kingdom. And creation is groaning and heaven is groaning and the Spirit is groaning and you're groaning but we're believing Christ in hope.

Hope of what? The first coming so we can sit around and eat ham on Christmas? That's not the point. The point is we're going to get there no matter how good your Christmas is. It's imperfect. You're struggling, you're sick. Things are bad. Things happen in this world. You have to say this isn't all there is. We do not have an over-realized eschatology. We have a hope of a coming king who's going to make "all things right, crooked straight, rough places plain, mountains low, valleys lifted up," everything to be made exactly the way it ought to be. And then we have the great coming of the king and "all flesh will see the glory of God, see it together." And the Lord in the zeal will accomplish it. That's yet to come. And we will obtain it "to the praise of his glory."

Go back up to verse 10, "a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things," including everything you see everywhere "in heaven and on earth" in him, "to unite it all in him." That's coming. That's future. Here's the phrase we've used twice, the fullness of time for the first coming, the fullness of time for the second coming. Do you know what that means? We have to recognize the fullness of time has nothing to do with your desires, it has to do with God's timetable. "It's not for you to know the times or the seasons." We need to understand something about God's timing.

Write this down, number two, the fullness of time. The fullness of time is a phrase used regarding the first coming when God sent his Son to redeem us under the law. Live under the law. Redeem us under the law. Second coming. We're waiting for the fullness of time. So God's got a timetable where he pulled the trigger on the first coming of Christ. He's got a



timetable when he's going to release Christ, to dispatch Christ to get the Church, and we're going to start this whole refreshment plan, this restoration plan. So that's going to happen in the fullness of time.

You have to realize, number two, you need to understand that "God's Timing is Best." Now, there are some words here that we don't like. Let's start with God's timing is God's timing. That's another way to say it. But God's timing, because he's God is the best timing, because he knows more than you. Like the first point. God keeps his promises. If I asked you when you got out of the car and I put a microphone in front of your mouth with a camera on you, "Hey, does God know more than you?" What are you going to say? "Yes." Did you say that when you were a kid about your parents? "Well, it was hard to say." Was it true? Oh, it was true. Here's one thing about your parents timing you probably didn't like when you were an adolescent. Your parent's timing. You didn't like that? I don't like my parent's timing. I didn't like my parent's timing. Most things about me as a petulant child was I want it now. I want everything now.

And I remember there was something I wanted more than anything as a 15-year-old. I wanted a car. I got my permit. I wanted my car. That was the blessed hope of my teenage years. The car. Right? The car. And my dad gave me a promise. I'll get your car. I mean, that was like up there with verses you would like knit and put on the wall. My promise. Right? I will get a car. Dad promised me a car. I'll never forget coming home one day and seeing the car in the driveway. It wasn't new. It could have been a Porsche 911 Carrera. It didn't matter. It looked like a car to me and for a 15-year-old, it didn't matter what. It was a primer gray '67 VW Bug. But there it was. And I knew Mom had a car. Dad had a car. I didn't have a car. There's a car in the driveway. My pace got faster as I got closer to the house.

After getting off the bus, not a school bus, a city bus, I don't know why the school buses weren't running when I was a kid for some reason. They hadn't invented school buses yet when I was a kid. I rode the city bus home. I came from the bus stop at the end of the street and I started picking it up. There's a car in the driveway. Is that a visitor? I don't think it's a visitor. I think this is my new car. And I ran to the house praising my father. Right? Yeah! I had a car. Dad said, "Did you see the car in the driveway?" Darn right I saw the car in the driveway. "Great. But do you like it?" I do like it. "I just want to let you know, it doesn't have an engine." (audience laughing) I wasn't real bright, but I knew this: I needed that part to fulfill all my fantasies about driving my new car. So I'm like, well, I don't have an engine. When do we get an engine for it? He said, "We're going to build one together in the garage at night." So how long does that take? "Be patient, my son. It's not for you to know the times or the season." (audience laughing)

There's nothing I wanted more than to get to work in that garage every night. And you know what I didn't know as a 15-year-old? How to build an engine. Dad knew how to build an engine. And you know what it's like when you're 15 years old when you go out with your dad to build an engine. What that means is like holding the flashlight. (audience laughing) And you know how that goes. It never goes well. Handing him tools that he specifically names that you have no idea what that is. I forgot what that was. Being chided for not knowing the names of



the tools in the tool chest. But I was building an engine. I've even used that as a, you know, as a verb that like with a personal first-person pronoun. "I built an engine." Well, I didn't do much building. Dad did most of the building, but I was there getting my hands dirty, trying to learn how to build an engine. And there were some nights where, like, are we going to go out in the garage Dad? "Nah, not tonight." What? "No, not tonight." Why? Arghh! It's such a slow process.

It took us months to build the engine. But one thing I learned about that season, I did not like my dad's timing at all. If you really start to append your hope on the coming of Christ, you're going to struggle with the wait. And that's okay as long as your struggle turns into increased anticipation and focus on the end, which is what the Bible says you should have, Colossians Chapter 3, "Set your minds on things above." And not on discouragement, not on laziness, not on all the laxities that Jesus talked about in his parables. Not with you thinking it was never going to happen. Never going to happen. Christ is coming back. The liberals have already told you it's not going to happen. Jesus, well, we believe him. He says he's coming back. "If I go, I'll go and prepare a place for you and I'll come again to receive you unto myself, that where I am you may be also."

Now, this is taking a long time, over 2,000 years now to get this thing done. But we're waiting for it. And the Bible would say you need to learn to wait well, with the kind of anticipation that says, I know God's timing is best because just like the coming of Christ couldn't have been ten years earlier or ten years later, the dispatching of Christ to come back again is going to happen "in the fullness of time." And God's timing is best because it's God's timing. And you like a petulant adolescent, you need to wait well, and the waiting is working, right? Working. We're going to work. We're going to work. God is going to utilize you to get this job done. Even though really it's him as the architect and builder of this thing called the redemptive kingdom. We call it the kingdom. We're gathering people with card-carrying member designations of I'm redeemed.

Turn with me to at least one passage where Jesus talks about this very clearly. How about Mark Chapter 13? He says you've got to think about this and be ready. We could be done at any time. Any time. I mean, I start to see something things put together on the engine, but, you know, there was a time we're going to just put that on to that transmission that bolted in with those bolts and we'd be done and we'd fire it up. And I couldn't even tell by the way this is going, like when is that going to happen? We need to be ready for this thing to be completed. As Second Peter 3 says you can start to doubt because it's been so long. That would be a dumb response to Jesus' promises because just like Simeon, an old man waiting for the first coming of the Messiah, he was "waiting for the constellation of Israel." I quoted that last week. And we need to be waiting for the coming of Christ, anticipating it.

Look at this passage, drop down to the bottom of the chapter, verse 32, Mark Chapter 13:32. "But concerning the day or the hour." When is it going to happen? When is it going to happen? "No one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son," which is mind-blowing, right? Just like Jesus didn't come out being able to speak Hebrew because he had to learn it. Here in his humiliation and the kenosis and the emptying of himself, he wasn't even aware of



the time. But he knew the Father, as even said after the resurrection. Right? "The Father has set in his own authority." I think the Son knows now. But in his humiliation here he did not know, but only the Father. So what's the response? God is keeping this a secret. We're not going to know it. You can't ask Gabriel or Michael. They don't know. So be on guard.

Be on guard against what? All the things he preached about for you. He told parables about like, if you don't think the master is coming back, you start to get drunk, you start to beat the fellow slaves. Don't do that. The master is coming. Be on guard against all the things you can do like doubting that he's coming back and keep awake. This is a metaphor for being consciously aware and focused on the coming of the master. "You do not know when the time will come." Verse 34, "It's like a man going on a journey, when he leaves his home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work." Hold the flashlight. Right? Hand me the tools. God's going to work through you. And he "commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore, stay awake," verse 35, "for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning, lest he come suddenly and find you," snoring, don't be "asleep. What I say to you I say to everyone: Stay awake."

I just wonder this Christmas, as you go back and try and grab anything out of these Christmas promises from the Old Testament, all the things we celebrate at Christmas and you hang on to these things and you know that most of them are not really realized quite yet. And I don't want you to spiritualize it. I don't want you to doubt it. Every single promise will be fulfilled. We got the redemptive promises filled. Christ died to forgive your sins. Now we're collecting people who are going to be forgiven by repenting and putting their trust in the gospel. Now we're waiting for the fulfillment, the blessed hope of the Christian life. You know what blessed means, the happy hope. The happy hope of the Christian life is that Christ will be dispatched to fix this whole thing.

And our hearts are there, our minds are there, and we're crying out like the early Church. Paul said to the Corinthians, that Aramaic phrase Maranatha. Right? We want you to come, come! The end of the Bible ends with, "Come" quickly "Lord Jesus!" Come! I just wonder where your heart is in relation to that. Are you awake or have you got a little dozy about the second coming of Christ? Do not doubt his promise. Every promise Christ makes is real and true. And in the first coming, we watched it all lay out, where he was born, when he was born, everything about his life.

And then there are a bunch of promises that weren't fulfilled. He leaves and he says, I'm coming back, and all those promises will be fulfilled. And we are supposed to live in the interim knowing that the timing that we don't like is best. You just keep working, you keep waiting, you keep anticipating, you keep being his witnesses, you keep making disciples, you keep being a light in that office and talking about Christ. You lose clients, you lose promotions, you lose your job, so be it. We are here to collect a group of people, a citizenry for the king. And then one day he's going to separate the people into two groups, those who are his people and those who are not. And he's going to say to those on his right, "enter into



the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world." His timing is best. We work, we stay awake, and you need to be assured that God will do everything that he says.

When I think about the fullness of time, I now shift to being absolutely assured. And the key word in this third point is the word "assured." You need to be assured, assured, absolutely confident God will be doing everything that he promised. He did a lot that he promised. We celebrate that at Christmas, but it's still going to leave you with some rotten experiences in December this year. But the Decembers after Christ comes back, there will not be a December without the fullness of joy in the presence of God. And all I'm telling you is when he makes this new world in which righteousness dwells, you and I will have the fulfillment of all the promises of God. And you need to be assured by that.

One passage on this. Go with me to Hebrews Chapter 6. Hebrews Chapter 6 starts with a reference to Abraham, and I wish we had time to go to the middle of Hebrews 11, where the story of Abraham and how he had to wait and you know the story. You're highly educated Christians here. You know Abraham had the name Abram before and "great father," but he wasn't a great father because he and his wife were infertile. They had no kids. They were past the age. They missed the window of having children. And so here he was. Great father was not a father. He wanted to be a father. Desperately wanted to be a father. And then God comes and says I'm going make you a great nation. And then nothing happened. And so he tries to take business into his own hands. And Hagar and Ishmael, you know all that story.

Well, here in this passage, it's used as an example of something that God wants for you, and I mean you, because he starts talking now, the writer of Hebrews, about the present congregation of which you're still in the continuity of this era, you're still a part of. So let's read this starting here in Hebrews Chapter 6 verse 13. It goes back to Abraham, "When God," look at it, Hebrews 6:13. "When God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear." Like we go to court, and say, "So help me God." And what's that all about? This is an imprecatory declaration, imprecatory. That means I want God to punish me if I'm not telling the truth. And you need someone greater than yourself to defer to someone whom you're praying an imprecatory pledge to. May God, so help me God, if I'm not telling the truth, may God strike me." That's what it's supposed to be.

So we have to employ someone greater. Well, you can't imagine God being called to the witness stand saying, I swear to God because he is God. That doesn't make any sense. That's exactly what he does. "He had no one greater to swear by, so he swore by himself." What? So God makes a promise and then he swears that he's going to keep the promise. God made a promise, verse 13. And then he swore that he would keep the promise, "Saying, 'Surely I will bless you and multiply you.'" I mean, that's the essence of this promise to Abraham that he was going to have a child. "Thus Abraham, having patiently waited," some days good, some days not so good, "he obtained the promise." He had a child.

Now that's an illustration employing a historical figure in Genesis. Now he says, "For people swear by someone greater than themselves, and in all the disputes an oath is final for confirmation." I mean that when you have, at least in the first century, people enlisting God's





punishment on them if they don't tell the truth then, well, he must be telling the truth. Verse 17. "So when God," I love this, use this verb here, "desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise." Now again, here's the promise. It starts with forgiveness of sins, but it culminates and all the stuff we deeply want. I want a perfect December. I want the world and the government resting on the shoulders of the righteous King. I want everything made right. I am an heir of that promise because I'm forgiven. "He desires," that's just a great word, "He desires to show," I love this, "more convincingly," to me, "to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose."

He always purposes. And he works that purpose out. That purpose and plan. He works at all "after the counsel of his will." And it relates to the first coming true. Fullness of time. Done. Second time. Fullness of time. It's going to be done. I need to be so assured by that. I love the words "he desires that I more convincingly assure to this that is unchangeable of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath." He guaranteed it to us. He promises that I swear I'll do it. I swear to myself I'll do it. Amazing. As Paul recites in his little book to Timothy, he says, God cannot break this promise, "he cannot deny himself." That's why. Because he is God. He states to Titus, "God who cannot lie," this God who just is impossible to deny himself. It says here "so that by two unchangeable things," promise and oath, a pledge. I promised it. And now I'm swearing "by two unchangeable things, in which," and he adds a third, "it's impossible for God to lie," based on his character, "we who have fled for refuge." And I hope that that's you.

This world stinks. There's a good Christmas quote for you. Tweet that. But we are hoping in the coming kingdom. And the only reason we have that hope assured convincingly is because God promised if you put your faith in him after hearing the message of the gospel, you will be a forgiven person. And if you're forgiven person, you've obtained a legal inheritance. You're a card-carrying citizen of the kingdom, and one day you will obtain that inheritance. And we're waiting for it. And we can't wait. Our confidence then, that "we fled to refuge" for him to be saved from this perverse generation, "we might have," here's another thing he wants, "strong encouragement." I love verse 17 "more convincingly" he wants you to know this, the "character of his purpose." And now here, he says, strong, not just encouragement, I want you to have "strong encouragement to hold fast to," and here's our word h-o-p-e, hope. The future. Future. "The hope," this is a great word here, "set before us."

What did he set before us? If you die, you're going to live. Trust in me, you won't be condemned. Put your confidence in me, repent of your sins, "no condemnation for those in Christ." I'm hanging on to that. And you're going to overcome the world. "In this world you'll have tribulation. But take heart," here's my promise, "I've overcome the world." And one day the kingdoms of the world has become the Kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ." This is going to happen. So we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. What does an anchor do? Throw the anchor down, big rope, big chain, holds the ship in place. Up at the top everything moves around, the wind, the storm. But that anchor holds steady. Right? "In this world," you're going to have storms, "tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." And what provides that anchor for me? Keep reading. "The hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain."



Here's a mix of metaphors for you. The anchor is going to end up being Christ the High Priest. The High Priest is the only one who can enter into the holy place. Once a year, Yom Kippur, the great high priest in Israel, would go into that one place within the curtain where this was supposed to be the focalized presence of the living God, and he represents us with shaking knees that God would bless the people. He represents God to the people and the people to God. This is a great role. And here we have the chain from our ship being tossed around in the tempest of this world, and we have this anchor that goes into the inner place where God dwells. I love this. Look at it. "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters in behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf." Guess what? We are going to be in that place where God dwells.

Matter of fact, let's put it properly and correctly eschatologically, that the presence, the dwelling place of God is going to come down here to earth. And that incarnate second person, glorified person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ, is going to dwell in the capital city of this world as sure as I'm standing here talking to you. That's the promise of God. And I know it's going to happen because every promise about the first coming came true and every promise about the second coming is going to come true. And our hope is the promise of an oath-making God who says, I swear to you I'm going to do this. And it should be like an anchor to my heart no matter what kind of tempest is being tossed into my life.

"Where Jesus has gone as a forerunner, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek," which of course, is dealing with a hard Jewish problem, how in the world can we have a legitimate high priest because the priestly tribe in the 1400s B.C was all related to the line of Aaron, Moses' brother, and you're saying he's a high priest. He can't be a high priest. Jesus was born of the line of Judah, Judah's the kingly tribe. How can he be the king and a priest? Well, because he's like the priest that was 600 years before Aaron was ever born. A man named Melchizedek, we don't know anything about. He runs on the scene and he's legitimized in Scripture as Abraham bowing down and giving a tithe to him and saying, here he is a real priest representing God to people and people to God. Of all people he's representing Abraham to God and God to Abraham. And he's not born of the line of Aaron. He's not the Levitical line. That's where he goes next in Chapter 7.

But the point is our anchor is a God who's made a promise and he's proved it historically by sending Christ into the presence of God, seated at the right hand of God saying, "You are going to have me, that where I am, you're going to be also, but I'm going to leave and I'm going to come again." The second coming of Christ, a cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith. And you need to be assured that God is going to do this. If we lose that you might as well lose all the other things that all the liberals lose because you're eventually going to lose the inerrancy of Scripture, they don't believe these things are literal. They don't believe it's true. It's all metaphorical, it's all parabolic. It doesn't really relate to what Jesus who was born without the sexual relationship with Joseph. This is just all... they don't believe... we'll de-mythologize the Bible. Stop it.



God who created the world with a word, according to Second Timothy 3, you ought to believe the predictions of the prophets because God is speaking to the prophets and what he says will come true. Why? Because God is faithful. We can't argue that God made the promises if you have any sense of dealing with the issue of what the Bible is. Now we're stuck with will he do it? I just love the words. He wants you to be "more convincingly confident of his unchanging purpose." He wants you to be absolutely assured in your heart. He wants you to have strong encouragement like an anchor in your soul, because he's a faithful God.

There was a man over a hundred years ago named Thomas Chisholm. Chisholm had a difficult life. He was a pastor at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the end of the 1800s, early 1900s. Back in those days, they didn't have these things strapped to the side of their head or when I first started preaching, strapped to my shirt. You couldn't whisper and have people hear you. So to be a preacher in the old days you had to have strong lungs. And he did not have strong lungs. Not only did he not have strong lungs, he started to have problems with the ears. He started to go deaf. And sadly enough this pastor had given his life to serve people by preaching the word of God. He ends up going deaf, so deaf that he can't even speak publicly, he can't speak loudly, he can't lift his voice anymore. So his denomination gave him a certificate that labeled him, how would you like to get this in the mail? Ineffectual. Right? You're done. Give up your pulpit. That was hard for him.

There's another man, William Runyan, and he had a hard life, too. He was a pastor and he lost his pastorate because he was sick, sickly. He got so sick he couldn't keep it up. He couldn't do it. Hard job. Just that hard job. And ended up having to quit. So he goes and he's working with Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, established in 1886. So here we are in the early part of the 20th century, early 1900s and he starts working in the department here where they're trying to develop things in sacred music and in writing hymns and making songs for church. And, of course, a lot of music there at Moody even in the day, just in chapel, they created a hymnal. But before they did, one of the things that he was doing was trying to find poems to be set to music.

And Chisholm had written this poem because of the pain in his own life and the suffering and the loss in his own life. But he knew this, that God is a good God, and ultimately it's going to end well in the end, because of his promises. I trust his promises. And God is a God who will do what he says he's going to do. And Runyan flipped through a bunch of these poems. Chisholm had taken these poems that he had, and some of the publishers out there had bought them. He was selling them for \$10 apiece and giving the rights away. Well, one of them had been rejected that Runyan saw and he said I could write music for that. And so Runyan does. He writes music for this one poem that he picks about God being faithful. They called it the Faithfulness Song. And he wrote this melody and they put it to music and it came out in the hymnal of the Moody Bible Institute Chapel hymnal. And they started to sing it at school. They sang it initially at a big event for Moody.

And then they started singing in the chapel all the time. In the middle of the 1930s, of course, we had the Great Depression. Everything went bad everywhere. And what was so good about that song coming out at the time and being popularized, written by two men going through



great pain and losing a lot in their lives, but saying God is faithful anyway is the fact that the whole country now was in pain saying, wow, this is bad. And they started to sing it during the Great Depression. And people loved this song because it gave them hope that God, even in the hard times, is a God who is faithful to his promises and he going to get us through because his mercies are new every morning, which of course is the echo of Lamentations 3, where the words, the key words for the Faithfulness Song came from.

When Jeremiah, of course, writes a lament, lamentations, and he's lamenting the fact that the Babylonians had wiped out the Temple Mount, wiped out Jerusalem, burned the city down, and he'd taken captives into Babylon. They hung their harps on the willow trees there in Babylon, and they were so sad. And yet, in this lament, Jeremiah says, you know, God's going to get us through this. In this world, we're going to have tribulation, but we've got to take heart, Christ has overcome the world. Or to put it another way, "his mercies are new every morning," as Jeremiah put it. And God's going to get us through. God will be faithful to his promises. There's a lot more to the story. William Holden, the president goes through some hard times, difficulties. This song gets sung all the time in Chicago. And they like it so much, they get George Beverly Shea, does anybody know, old timers who that is, to come into the studio in Chicago and to record it. And so Billy Graham, of course, picks it up and it starts being sung all over the place in the middle of the 20th century in the 1900s.

It became a staple. I know you've sung it many times. They changed the name from the Faithfulness Song to Great Is Thy Faithfulness, which is the refrain of the song. And it reminds us, of course, that no matter whether we have the armies march in and destroy Jerusalem or the armies march in and disband churches like they disbanded the Compass Bible Church that we started in Amman, Jordan, and the secret police dismantled it. Even if that happens, God's mercies "are new every morning." Great is his faithfulness in every promise, starting with the fact that we are redeemed and forgiven is true now. We believe and trust that God does what he says he does, redeemed by his blood. But all the promises that lead to our triumph, our reigning, our ruling, our becoming rich in the kingdom. All that's true. It's just not now. But his faithfulness ensures that for me. We need to be those who cling to this, that God is a God that will do what he says because God is a faithful God.

Let's pray. God, please let us cling to the faithful character of what you have revealed yourself to be, not only revealed in propositional statements but you proved it in hard facts of history. You've sent your Son exactly as Daniel 9 says in terms of the timetable. You've put him in a village that no one would really guess in terms of what mass population center you'd send the Messiah to. And not only that, you said you'd raise him up north in Nazareth and you did that by having him carried by a young girl from northern Galilee and sent down to Bethlehem to have him born in the city that David grew up in. You've kept your promises even of crushing him and making his life a guilt offering so our sins can be forgiven. You've made it true, as Romans 8 says, as Isaiah 53 promised, that he would be an intercessor for sinners and transgressors like us. And then everything of Isaiah 9, Isaiah 33, Isaiah 40. All of those things are true. The Lord will come. But what we need to add is the word "again." Knowing that he will because you're faithful to the promise and the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all



flesh will see it together. But let us be confident about what's going to happen because you are faithful.

In Jesus name. Amen.