

Don't Miss It-Part 3
Grappling with Doubts by Revisiting God's Imprimatur on the Truth
Pastor Mike Fabarez

I grew up with a big brother. And like most big brothers, he didn't always tell me the truth. Did you have a big brother like that? Mine was four years older, so he took advantage of that. And there were so many things. I would be riding in the backseat of my parents' '64 Chevy Impala heading down the freeway and making faces at my brother and sticking my tongue out at him and crossing my eyes at him, and he'd say, "Oh no, no, no, whoa, don't do that. Say, don't do that with the windows down. So, you know, if that wind comes in through that window and hits your eyes while they're crossed, they'll stay that way." That put an end to all my eye crossing.

Or like when we were sitting on the back stoop eating slices of watermelon, and then I accidentally would swallow them, and I'd go, "Oops, just swallowed the seed." He'd go, "Oh, man, not good. So, you know, our neighbor that's pregnant, have you seen her? That's you, babe, tonight." I remember waking up in the night, kind of feeling my belly every two hours. He's terribly frightened.

Now, I was always hit with the dilemma with my brother when he would claim to speak for my parents. That's when it got really dangerous. Because he would say things like, "Well, you know, Mom said to stay at the school after school. Don't walk home, because she's going to come by and pick you up when class is over." And I'd look at him like, "Really?" Or he'd say, "You know, Dad said you don't have to make your bed this morning, so don't bother making your bed. Just come on and get some breakfast." "Are you sure?" And it was hard because, you know, if he was just being my brother, then, you know, I could just disregard it. But what if Mom was going to pick me up after school? If I walked home and she's coming by to pick me up, there was a lot at stake. If Dad did not say, "I don't have to make my bed," I had better make my bed regardless of what my brother's... But it was hard. He comes in saying, "Well, you know, this is what Mom and Dad say."

You know, with all the contradictory information about God as we traverse this 21st-century Christianity, I think, much like a big brother, it is important for us to bring a certain healthy skepticism to those that would want to say, "Well, here's what God says. Here's what God thinks. Here's what God requires of you." Because there are a lot of people speaking for God. But, you know, we better be really sure that what we're hearing is true, because God says there is a ton at stake.

As a matter of fact, if you've been with us through our study of Hebrews and you paid attention last week, we looked at the middle section of this first paragraph in Hebrews chapter 2, and I'd like for you to look at it again tonight and remember that we looked at a God who is holy and just and says, "I'm fully in charge." Now, if God is really the holy and just God, and skim your eyes down it again and look at verse number 2 that we studied last week. If he really is a God who brought a message through the Old Testament, through the angels, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, and now he says the ante is even up higher because this salvation has got to be greater than that one, and man, you just don't want to drift past it. Look at verse number 1. I mean, that's how it all started. You better pay attention as you're floating down the river. You better grab the truth because, you know, if you don't, there's a lot at stake here. You can't afford to miss it.

I mean, if that's the kind of God we're dealing with, then we'd better be really sure we're getting our information straight through these guys, the apostles, through Christ. Because if it's not the truth, then, you know, we're just kind of overplaying all this. I mean, if these disciples were just kind of morally uptight people that were just tired of listening to, you know, all these Pharisees with all their stuff, and then maybe they're on some kind of power play, or maybe they're just, you know, just trying to keep everybody morally or ethically in line, and all this stuff, talk of heaven and hell and punishment and judgment, maybe that's all just a manipulative tactic, then we can just disregard this. We can just go for tacos tonight and forget church and, you know, play golf all day on Saturday. There'd be a lot of better things we could do. We could kind of let our guard down. We can preach on feeling good and finger painting or whatever people preach on, you know. We can do other stuff than all this hardcore, "Well, this is what God says and we better do it, and if you don't do it, there's consequences."

We better make sure beyond a reasonable doubt. Because if the stakes are as high as the writer of Hebrews says they are, it's time for us to say, "Wait a minute, I got to be sure." And that's where he goes in the middle of verse number 3. And today, as we get to this section, I want you to realize that faith is not, as some people pitch it, just you checking your brain in at the door and saying, "Well, I guess if that's what the Bible says..." We'd better know that the Bible is an accurate source of biblical, true information. That we know this is God's stuff. Because if it's not, then, you know, maybe we shouldn't take it so seriously.

In the middle of verse number 3, he says, "This salvation that we're talking about," and going to talk a whole lot more about throughout the book of Hebrews, "which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him, and God testified to it, by signs and wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will." I mean, basically, he's addressing the issue here of, is it true? I mean, is this something that we really can be sure of? Has God put his imprimatur on this? Has he said, "This is the truth"? Can we be certain? Because if it is true, then we ought to be as exacting as we're trying to be here. If it's not, then we should look for another source of truth. But he says, "Oh, it is true."

As a matter of fact, it started with an announcement by Jesus. See the word "Jesus" there? Underline the word "Jesus." Do you see that? Interactive church? Help me now. Does it say "Jesus"? What does it say? "Lord." Oh, we're not even going to use his name here. The writer of Hebrews says, "No, no, no. Let's talk about what we've been through in the first chapter." He says it was first announced through the Lord. And if you've been with us on Thursday nights, it just seems that God has been taking us a lot through the implications of this word Lord, that he's in charge, that he is this one.

Look across the page, chapter 1. I mean, this is where we started in this whole study. I mean, God, he's spoken to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days, he's spoken to us by his Son. By the way, here's some credentials. He's the heir of all things, through whom he made the universe. He is your maker. The Son, by the way, is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. And if he wants to have you cease to exist, he's just got to stop saying it, so be it, and you're gone. He's in charge.

And after, by the way, because of his great mercy toward us, he's made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Oh, and if you want to talk about big, powerful, angelic beings, no comparison. And we went into this long, lengthy discussion about the lordship of

Christ and how important it is for us to recognize who we're talking about when we say Jesus says this or Jesus says that. The salvation that is so critical, that really holds our future in the balance, was first spoken to us by the Boss. That's what Lord means, right?

Now here's the thing. If you've not ever doubted this message of Christianity, I'm a little concerned for you. Because we should all come into this recognizing the message of Christianity is going to direct our entire life. It's going to take us to where now we're saying we're living our lives by a whole different set of rules. That's a major redirection. And we've got to say, "Well, wait a minute. If that's the case, if this is really... then I should think about it. I should put it under some analysis and say, is there veracity to the message of Christianity?" And so he says, yeah, you should think that, and you should realize that the Lord was the one who spoke this message first.

When in doubt, and maybe you've been through a season of doubt and you've passed it, great. Maybe you're in the middle of it now. This message is for you. Or you're always going to run into people that are encountering that bump on the road that says, "Is it true?" This message will be helpful, I trust, for you.

Let's look at this. Number one, when in doubt, when your neighbor's in doubt, your friend is in doubt, your own mind is in doubt, when you're sitting there wondering in the dark, "Now wait a minute, this is affecting everything in my life. Is this message true? Is God's message true?" When in doubt, do this.

Number one, we need to recall Christ's credentials. Recall his credentials. Because apparently, to the writer of Hebrews, this is important that this came through the Boss, the one in charge. When you're tempted to doubt, we've got to think, why should I listen to the message of Christ? Why is that important?

Keep your finger here in Hebrews chapter 2, and let's look at Jesus's own claim about his own life. Luke chapter 24, the end of the book of Luke. Why should I be listening to this? Is this something that really is just... I'm to adhere to the message of Christ because I like his principles better than Mohammed's, or, you know, I really prefer the Christian way better than the Hindu way, or... I mean, why this? Why this teaching based on Christ?

Christ is making a claim here after his resurrection, which, by the way, is a pretty nice badge hanging off your shirt to start with, right? I was dead, and now I'm alive. But he says, "I want you to know that everything that I've done and everything I've lived, and even my resurrection itself, is something that... I didn't just show up and say, 'Hey, I just want to let you know how important I am.'" This is something that's been anticipated for thousands of years. As a matter of fact, that whole Bible you've been reading, those 39 books that have been collected and the center of worship and teaching and learning in this Jewish tradition has all been pointing to me.

When I was a student at University of Arizona, I may have told you this story a couple times, there was a guy who used to jog around the perimeter of the campus every morning, and he wore a T-shirt. Kind of a strange-looking guy, but he wore a T-shirt that said God, G-O-D. And he even had a scepter that was like spray-painted gold or something that he ran and jogged with in the morning. He had this little headband. I guess he thought it looked like a halo or something. He put the... it wasn't really white. It used to be white. It was like brown. But he ran around the campus.

Now, the guy claimed to be God. I mean, he just came out and said it. His T-shirt said it. “Here’s who I am. I’m God.” Now, the problem was, he didn’t have anything to back it up. He didn’t look like God. He didn’t smell like God to me. He didn’t have anything that would make me think, wow, where do I worship? How can we worship you? Because there was nothing objective about his claim to godship.

Now, we have a lot of claims that Christ made. One of the objective truths that he kept throwing out there, saying, “Listen, you’ve got to see this, this isn’t new. As a matter of fact, everything that you’ve read and studied for centuries before I came has been pointing to me.” With specificity.

Here’s how he puts it. Two accounts. I love Luke 24, because he does this twice in this chapter. Look at verse 24. Luke 24:24. You want clarity about what Christ thinks? Here’s the end of a discussion. Two guys on the road to a city named Emmaus. You remember the story. Cleopas is one of the guys. The other guy doesn’t get named. In verse 24, they’re trying to explain to Christ—they don’t recognize him, they don’t know that it’s Christ—and they say, “Well, you know, some of our companions went to the tomb and we found it just as the women had said. I mean, it was empty. We didn’t see him there. So I don’t know what happened to him,” right?

Jesus says, verse 25, “How foolish you are. How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” Interesting. “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” What prophets are you talking about? Verse 27: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” He says, “Listen, I just want to tell you, everything that you’ve been studying and your forefathers have been studying about the coming one, it’s all fulfilled in me. Oh, and you want a Bible study? Great. Let’s sit down and look at it.”

Drop down to verse 44. Has the same kind of encounter with his disciples. His disciples are sitting around, and they’re talking about all that’s happened, and Christ shows up and he says, “This is what I told you when I was still with you,” Luke 24:44. “Everything must be fulfilled that was written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.” Even the Psalms. Even your songbook has been talking about me. “And he opened their minds.” I mean, they had an amazing Bible study right here, “so that they could understand the Scriptures. And he told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.’” All this stuff you’ve seen, it’s exactly what’s been taking place.

And the message that I’ve been preaching to you since Mark 1:15, that you ought to repent of your sins, that’s the message: that repentance and forgiveness of sins are going to be preached in his name, the Christ’s name, my name, to all the nations beginning at Jerusalem. “Guys, you’re witnesses to all these things. You’ve seen it. You can objectively verify the facts that everything you learned in Sabbath school as kids and everything that your great-great-great-grandfathers have been studying and learning and preaching, you know, look at my life. I fulfilled it all.”

Now, that’s objective. If the guy in Tucson at the University of Arizona could sit me down and say, “I just want to show you everything in your Bible has been pointing to me,” and he starts explaining to me, “Well, here’s where I was born and this is what I did. And then here’s just right here. Look, you can objectively verify my story.” See, now that would have been different. We would have had quite a discussion at that point. But all he had to claim to be divinity was a T-shirt. So I, you know, I wasn’t convinced.

Christ says, “Listen, you want to objectively know whether you should listen to me or not, and my message? Look at how my life supernaturally fulfills the predictions of the Old Testament.”

You want to get specific? We should. Get your pen ready. Here’s some references. Just jot them down. Here’s just a few. We could go on all night with this theme. How about this one? Let’s start in Genesis. Just jot down the reference. Genesis 22:18. The prediction that the coming one who would solve the ultimate problems of the universe would come as a descendant of Abraham. And you’re going, “Oh, that narrows it down to a few million.” Okay. Not impressed? Keep reading the Bible. That’s just Genesis 22.

How about Genesis 49:10? It said, “Oh, and by the way, you know, Israel’s going to be broken up into 12 tribes, this whole discussion about the 12 parts of Israel. Oh, by the way, the ruler, the one, the ultimate king, is going to come through the line of Judah.” Now, that’s a one-in-12 chance. It’s getting a little bit more impressive at this point.

How about this one? Jeremiah 23, verse 5. It says, not only from the line of Judah, with all the rivalries going on—and there were plenty of them—within the tribe of Judah, he says, “I want to let you know, Messiah will come through the lineage of David. That’s where it will come specifically.”

Oh, and how about this one? Micah 5:2. If you’re wondering where he’ll be born, let me pick a city for you. This is hundreds of years before the birth of Christ. He’ll come from the city of David in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2. So now you’re calling where he’s from, which tribe he’s from, which line he’s from, and where he’s going to be born?

How about when he’s going to be born? Galatians 4:4 says he comes at the exact time God wants him to. Why is that so important? How about this one? Daniel chapter 9. Jot that one down. Daniel 9, verses 24 through 26. We’ve done studies on this. You can get the tapes. And you can see how exacting God is about the coming of Messiah. He said it would be 497 years after the exile to Babylon. Four hundred ninety-seven years. He called it five centuries before it happened. And by the way, if you go through that and you look at Nisan 1 and the decree of Artaxerxes, and you go through all of that, you end up exactly to the place where the Messiah will be cut off, the week of the Passion. That’s pretty impressive stuff.

And you want to talk about his death and his resurrection? Just study Isaiah 53 sometime. Isaiah 53, verses 4 through 10, clearly say this innocent one, this perfect one, this servant of God will die a murderous death as though he is a sacrificial guilt offering. Now, what are the chances of a perfect rabbi dying like that? And then, if that’s not enough, Isaiah 53, verses 8 through 12—and I know those verses overlap, but starting in verse 8, he begins to refer to as clearly as can be the fact that after this perfect suffering servant is killed and murdered, he will triumphantly see life again. That’s called the resurrection. Word’s not used there, but read it, study it, see it. And now all of a sudden we have his resurrection predicted. Perhaps one of the passages Jesus turned his disciples to, and Cleopas and the other guy on the road to Emmaus. Look, man, this has been predicted from centuries back.

Now, you can’t do that unless there’s something supernatural making it happen. I mean, you just can’t predict it. I mean, they say, you know, Gene Dixon or Nostradamus, right? Have you read those people? I mean, read them sometime. They claim Gene Dixon’s right about 50 percent of the time, and they’re all going, “Yay, Gene Dixon, 50 percent.” You know, in Israel, if you’re a prophet

and predict things right 50 percent of the time, you know what happens to you? Yeah. We throw rocks at your face. That's what happens.

As a matter of fact, the Bible's very clear. If you're going to be a prophet and understood authoritatively in Israel, you have to be right 80 percent of the time. That's what the Bible says. Ninety-four, ninety-five, something like that. What's the Bible say? Deuteronomy 18. You'd better be right 100 percent of the time. And if you're not, we take you out back, we pick up rocks and throw them at you. No one wants to be a prophet, a prognosticator in Israel, unless, of course, you're going to stand up and speak for God. And who can possibly do that? Who can say what line Messiah will come from? How in the world does he have the gumption to try and stand up and say what city he's going to be born in?

God must be involved in this. And if God is involved in this, I stand back and say, "Jesus, wow, unique. I guess I better listen to you." And if you're wearing a label that says exact radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his nature, then I stand back and say, "Wow, that's pretty impressive. Now, what should I do? What's this repentance and faith thing all about? Oh, okay. I better listen to you."

And if someone else wants to say, "Well, no, that's not what you have to do. You don't want to live right. All you got to do is live by these Proverbs here. You want to live right? All you got to do is just do this..." I better be listening to Christ, because this salvation message was first proclaimed from the Lord. And if you haven't written it down yet, Mark chapter 1, verse 15 says he comes preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and it comes with two strong imperatives: repent, that's what he says, and believe or trust in the good news. That's the message. And we've been learning about it on Thursday nights, if you haven't been with us, and we touched on it last week. It's as crystal clear as it can be.

And the Bible says, you know what? You ought to listen to Christ. Because this salvation wasn't just first announced from, you know, Jim or Joe or Fred. It was announced from the Lord, the Boss. And if you know anything about his life, I ought to be listening. Why should I listen to Christ? Because his life was a supernatural fulfillment of Scripture. And only God can do that. And God did do it.

If you want to get more into the messianic prophecies of the Bible, I've got, as I do every week, a reading list on the back. And this week it got really big, and I'm sorry. It was so I didn't have to write as many discussion questions, I guess. But that wasn't the reason. On there, there's three messages that I've preached recently, fairly recently. One of them is on... God called it. I don't know the number on it, 554, I think. Oh, 554, when we were in Romans chapter 1. If you were with us for the Thursday night study, we talked about the fact that this is a God thing. We looked at Isaiah 44, for instance. Who can possibly predict the future? God can. And it's no problem for him because he sees the first from the last. If you want to get into that more, so that you are without a doubt convinced that Christ is unique and his life is supernaturally attested by God himself, and when God shows up and says, "This is my Son in whom I'm well pleased. Hear him. Listen to him," then we ought to be fully convinced. That way we don't listen to what Christ says and then say, "Well, you know, I don't know. That's pretty good advice, maybe."

It's not advice. Last week we talked about the fact that God, when he speaks, he gives us commands, right? Not the Ten Suggestions, it's the Ten Commandments. It's the law, right? His word is law. Why? Because he's in charge. He speaks with authority.

When in doubt, when you're wondering, "Well, I don't know. Christianity, maybe not hardcore Christianity. I don't know. Middle-of-the-road Christianity..." recall Christ's credentials. And therefore his word, as the old hymn says, becomes law. Oh, I love that hymn. "His word our law, his path our chosen way." Anybody know what hymn that's from? Old-timers, come on. "God of Our Fathers." Remember that old great hymn? Yeah. "His word our law, his path our chosen way." All right. Well, sorry. We'll sing that. I'll do a solo at the end of the sermon. Just kidding. Yeah. Thank you. Please don't.

All right. Hebrews chapter 2. The salvation that we've been learning about, this God of authority, this God of justice, this God of holiness, this God who's willing to mercifully reach out and save us, that message was first announced by the Boss, by the Lord, by the one in charge. And the writer of Hebrews says, "It was confirmed to us by those who heard him," because he knows he's preaching to a crowd of people, and you guys didn't hear him firsthand. So we got this message from those first-generation people that heard him.

And those were testified to by God himself, verse 4. "God also testified to it," that is, the message that was announced by those who heard him, "by," look at these things, "signs, wonders, and various miracles, gifts." These were gracious things that God did of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to the Holy Spirit's will. He decided to go boom, boom, boom, boom, boom with things that were really wow, signs, wonders, and various miracles. And it was something that was God's imprimatur on the truth. Here. Here's the imprimatur on the truth. You are speaking a message, and I'm going to confirm it by miraculous events, by the breaking of natural law.

Second thing we need to examine. And tonight, we don't have enough time to deal with it all. That's never stopped us, though, in the past, I realize. But let's just at least touch on this topic. Number two on your outline. When in doubt, when you're going through a season of doubt, when you're dealing with someone that is, rethink the apostle's authority. Because we didn't sit down and chat with Christ on the road to Emmaus. I'm relying on Luke to give me that message, who was Peter's traveling companion. Or I'm listening to Matthew the tax collector, who walked with him, and I'm reading the story. So I'm relying on secondhand news. How do I know they're telling me the truth? I may be really impressed with Christ's credentials, but who are these guys speaking on his behalf? Great question. We need to ask it.

Keep your finger here in Hebrews 2 and turn with me, please, if you would, to Luke chapter 6. Let's start back a little ways and figure out how Jesus set this whole thing up with this first generation of people, this small group of people, by the way, that were designated with a special name in Luke chapter 6. Why should I listen to the apostles? Why should we listen to these firsthand people? What's this miracle signs and wonders thing all about? This is important. It's often overlooked and often misunderstood.

Luke 6:12. "One of those days Jesus went out on a mountainside to pray and he spent the night praying to God." That's amazing. A whole sermon could be preached there, but keep going. Verse 13. "When morning came, he called his disciples," which, by the way, was the word for follower of Christ. There was no word Christian that was in vogue at this time. If you were someone who was committed to following Christ, you were called a disciple. So he calls this group of disciples to him, and he chose, underscore this, 12 of them. Twelve. "Whom he designated"—now he's going to give them a new title—what does he call them? Apostles.

What's the difference between disciples and apostles? Well, there was a big group of disciples, and then he picked a group, a very small group, 12 apostles. Apostles. And it should be capitalized. It's the technical use of this word. To be an apostle of Christ is to be someone who speaks on Christ's behalf. These are going to be special people, and he names them all by name throughout the Scripture. Verse 14: "Simon, whom he named Peter, his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James..." It goes on and on down this list, saying, you know, here are the 12. And 12 is a specific and limited number. You need to realize that. Because I know there's guys in L.A. renting out stadiums calling themselves apostles or whatever. And you could do it too. Go rent the Pond and put up a sign and say, "Apostle Jim," and "I'm the apostle of Orange County and I'm here to speak."

Listen, here's the thing. There are 12 apostles. The word is used in a capital-A sense, a technical sense, and sometimes in Scripture with a small-a sense. The capital-A sense is the one I'm concerned with. Capital A, the technical use of the word apostle is someone who is authorized to speak with all the authority of the one who sends them.

When my brother comes in and he says, "Here's what Mom said. Mom says don't eat dinner. As a matter of fact, when she gets home we're going to dinner," see, and I say, "Well, I don't know. You know, is that true? I want... I'm hungry. I'm going to eat dinner anyway." "No, no, you can't. I know I'm just your brother, but I'm speaking on behalf of Mom. And Mom will whip your butt if you don't do what she says. Worse yet, she might tell Dad to do that to you." Sorry. That was last week's sermon.

But I don't want to get in trouble, so I'm going to listen carefully. What's the message? And I can only know that he's an apostle if he produces something that's convincing and incredible, which he often did, because he was always moving things around on the kitchen table. And often Mom would leave a note there, and he would come in, and I would want proof, so he'd bring the note and say, "See, look, Mom wrote a note right here. You can't..." Yeah, okay? So then I was convinced that I didn't eat dinner because Mom's going to come home, we're going to go out to dinner. But I needed to be convinced of that. And when I was convinced and he brought the note, and it was maybe, right, maybe to him, "David, tell your brother..." boom, boom—that was enough. I now had to adhere to his word about that matter insofar as my parents wrote it and commanded him to tell me. And if I disobeyed that, I'm disobeying my parents. That is a special category.

And the disciples don't have that authority. The apostles have that authority. And not the apostles with the small a, the apostles with the large A—sent ones. And they were promised by God to have a signature on them, a signature that they were able to do things that other people couldn't do. That way, when people showed up in your village, say in Corinth or Ephesus or one of the cities of Galatia, and said, "Here's what God says about how to be saved. All you got to do is do this," I know I could say, "Well, that's different than what this guy says, and he says he's speaking for Christ too. How do I know which is true?" God was going to give them a signature. And it is spelled out in Hebrews chapter 2, verse number 4. God is going to testify to their message with signs, wonders, and various miracles.

Now, how many was there? Twelve. Okay. And if you were associated perhaps with a person that was an apostle, then there were things that came with that. Here's a good passage to jot down: 2 Corinthians 12:12. Paul says, "You know that there are things that accompany or mark an apostle, and they are signs, wonders, and miracles." If they can come in and break natural law, and they're

not pointing to a passage of Scripture because the New Testament's yet to be written, what the apostles say is as though God were saying it. It's the same.

Now, if you're wondering, well, 12, I don't think there's 12. Here's a passage you should jot down too, in the margin of your Bible or on your notes somewhere. How about this one? Revelation chapter 21, in the discussion about the New Jerusalem, verses 12 through 14. There's a discussion about the fact that in this 1,500-mile cube that we're going to live in called the New Jerusalem with our resurrected bodies, it's got 12 gates and 12 foundations on the walls around it. The 12 gates are going to be labeled, and they're going to be named after the 12 tribes of Israel. Remember that? And then it says the 12 foundations that surround the wall will be named after the 12 apostles. Twelve tribes, 12 apostles. They serve a special role.

And God says—here's another passage. We should look at this. We don't have a third service after this, and that's so wonderful. So let's look this text up since we have time and you brought your Bibles and that's why you're here. John chapter 16. Let's go to John chapter 16. God is trying to say, if you are my spokesperson and I put on you this extra ability that God will endow by his will for you to break natural law, then your message will be binding. And as a matter of fact, what you say, people need to adhere to. You will be the conduits of my information, whether you speak it or whether you write it.

John chapter 16, verse number 5. Jesus speaking to his disciples. It's near the end. It's the locker-room discussion at the very end before he goes and sends his team into the world. And he's going to be on the sideline. He's not going to be on the field with them anymore. Verse 5... judgment. That's going to be his job. Think about that now. The Spirit, through these apostles, these 12, are going to be convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment, which is what we were studying in the first part of chapter 2 of Hebrews last week. In regard to sin, because men don't believe in me, and they're in a big heap of trouble being alienated from me. In regard to righteousness, because they don't have me, the Holy One, living in front of them. I'm going to the Father where they can see me no longer. In regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned, and we're going to be condemned if we don't repent.

Verse 12: "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth." Make sure you circle the you. The you is not us just because we get the Spirit. He's not talking to us. He's talking to his 12 right here. "More than that, you can..." I'm sorry, verse 14. No, no, I wasn't done with verse 13, was I? "Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own. He will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come." There again, the imprimatur of Christ's life, the ability of predictive prophecy. He's going to give you that too. So everyone's going to know. Just like he says over there in Matthew that he's going to endow them with this ability to do miraculous things.

Verse 14: "He will bring glory to me by taking what is mine and making it known to you." That's revelation. You will have the revelatory ability to have the Spirit give you information that's coming from me. "All that belongs to the Father is mine. That's why I said the Spirit will take what is mine and make it known to you. In a little while, you'll see me no more, and then after a while you will see me." That's a reference to the resurrection. That's why it's the same you, the same group of people. It's not us. We weren't seeing him and then don't see him and then see him again. This is the 12.

Here's the point. God has made promises, much like he does later in the book of John, where he says, "You are going to be able to supernaturally recall the things that I've told you. I'm going to give you the ability to be conduits of my information." And when I am, I'll give you the ability to foretell the future, to break natural law. You'll be able to be endowed with signs of an apostle—signs, wonders, and miracles. And that's going to be what you're known for. It will be the objective attestation of your message. See?

Now, there's another message on the back that's referenced in the box on the back, which says "When God chooses..." I don't know, "a brief study of when God chooses to break the rules he made." That's a real lengthy title, but I thought it was kind of good. "A brief study of when God chooses to break the rules he made," or something like that. You need... you know, and it's not because we're low on tape sales and we need to bolster tape sales. I'm trying to get you to buy these tapes. Matter of fact, just put it on your account down there or bring it back next week, get it for free, whatever. But on the patio, on the chocolate-chip-cookie patio, go down and grab a tape on this message if you didn't hear it, because what you... and that's the GT1, GT2 sermon. You remember that? Okay, recall this.

I went through the Bible, and you could do the same, and counted 191, I think it was, 191 specific miraculous events recorded in the text of Scripture. One hundred ninety-one. Do your own count and maybe 195, whatever. We can talk about it. But that's my count, okay? If you divide those up into specific categories, you will see that 90 percent of those, like 176 of them, come in three very brief periods of history in the Bible. The miracles aren't on every page. You realize that.

The first rash of them, 33 specific spoken miracles, came in Moses's ministry at the giving of the law. He wrote Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And what was left behind in the wake of this miraculous rash of 33 miracles, undeniable breakings of natural law, was five books of the Bible. It was the foundation.

Then you have this period of time where God is going to speak through the prophets. And so on the scene come guys like Elijah and Elisha, the second rash of miraculous. And you can count—or at least I did—66 miraculous events, GT1s and GT2s, that were undeniable, that took place in the Bible right there in the period of the prophets. And what they left behind was all the writings of the prophets, the bulk of the Old Testament.

Then there were 66, amazingly, 66—not that I'm into numerology, but it's interesting—66 more specific miracles referred to in the ministry of Christ and his disciples, all within a period of just, what, 7, 10, 15 years in the book of Acts and the Gospels? So I got 33, 66, 66—or for you, it's 33, 66, 66, okay?

What comes after the rash of the miraculous? The law, the prophets, the New Testament. See? God is not into breaking natural law to do sideshows for your friend that wants to know if it's true or not. God is into breaking natural law to leave behind a corpus of writings so that we can look at it and say, there is God's truth. It has been authenticated by the miraculous. Because those people that want God to be breaking natural law every time they have a splinter in their finger, that spells chaos. God governs his world by natural law. He occasionally breaks it because he made the rules for a specific reason, revelatory reasons. So he can say, "That's true. Listen to that."

Now Christ, undeniably credible, his credentials impeccable. The apostles, a bunch of fishermen and tax collectors, I don't know if I want to believe those guys. The Bible says, yes, with the

coming of the law, the prophets, and the new covenant, I made sure and did something that no one could deny. And that's my message, and I'm just using my messengers to get it down on paper. That's impressive.

As a matter of fact, that is a history that no one would deny. Here's some more passages for you. And again, you've got to realize these are things that are said, they're written and codified in the generation in which these people did these things. This isn't like making up a story about Abraham Lincoln. This is like making up a story about Bush. You know? This is in the generation that it happens.

Passages. Acts chapter 2 is a good example. Acts chapter 2, jot this down, verses 42 and 43. The apostles were known. Everyone was filled with awe because they were performing wonders, signs, and miraculous signs that were done at the apostles' hands. How about this one? Acts 5, verses 12 and 13. It says, "The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people, and they all met together in Solomon's Colonnade, and no one else dared to join them." I wouldn't want to hang out with them either, I wouldn't think, even though they were highly regarded by the people. And verse 14 says, "And then everybody starts becoming disciples." But there were 12 apostles, and those apostles, they were like, "Ooh, I don't know. Those guys are kind of scary, and they're breaking natural law."

Here's another passage you should jot down. Acts chapter 14. This is when all this stuff is going down. Verse 3. It says, for Paul and Barnabas—Paul, who I think is not Matthias. I think Paul's the twelfth apostle. That's a bet we can solve, by the way, one day when we see the New Jerusalem, okay? I got five dollars on Paul. "Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there speaking boldly for the Lord." And when they did, it says, God confirmed the message, their message of his grace, by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders. This is how it works, okay?

Now that we have the writings of these people, we have Matthew's writings, we have Mark, Luke, John, Paul, we got the New Testament, James. We got it spelled out here for us. It's a message that you and I should be listening to. And what did the apostles teach? You want a good summary of it? How about Acts 20:21? Paul says, "I didn't neglect and hold back anything that was profitable for you. I preached to you even from house to house, I preached to you." And what was the message? "I preached to both Jews and Greeks that you should repent." Repent. Turn from your sins. "And have faith in our Lord Jesus." Message of repentance and faith. Hey, it sounds a lot like Mark 1:15. Hey, pretty simple. Pretty straightforward.

Okay, that's great. But, you know, I've never been to a Christ event where Christ is preaching, and I haven't been to an Apostle Paul event, or a Peter event, or a Luke event either. I got that fat guy with the flowered shirts up there talking to me all the time. So, you know, I don't know if I'm going to believe this or not. I mean, because we're... I mean, no one's talking to an apostle now.

Okay, good question, and it's a valid question. Third thing we need to do when it comes to the issue of doubt. Great, I can't get you a meeting with Christ, okay? Not unless you want to check out of the world permanently. I can't get you a meeting with the apostles, okay? All I'm left to deal with is the documents that they left behind, okay? So we've got to ask that question. When in doubt, number three, research the documents. We have to research the documents. Because if this is a miraculous life—Christ—and a document, or at least a message I should say, that comes through the apostles that is miraculously authenticated through the breaking of natural law, then what do I

do with this document? It should have some signs that this comes from God. I mean, it should, I would think. The documents. Yeah.

Hebrews chapter 2, unfortunately, it's not applicable to us in the sense that, I mean, we can't listen to that first generation speak about the Lord and do their miraculous signs and wonders because they're not here anymore. Okay, why should I listen to the Bible? Okay, let's think through this quickly as we possibly can. And I'll talk even faster. Ready? I'm sorry. No, I won't. I'll slow down. Let's turn to Matthew chapter 22. The first thing we've got to ask ourselves is if the credentials of Christ are really as impeccable as we say they are. I mean, here's a guy that rose from the dead, and I want to listen to a person like that. Not a guy who wears a t-shirt and carries around a spray-painted scepter. I want to listen to a guy who has the credentials of Christ, where I can look back at a body, a corpus of teaching that goes on for generations before he shows up and he says, well, I did that and I was born there and that's my tribe. That's what I did. And I died as a vicarious substitute and I rose again.

So I've got the credentials of Christ. I want to know how he looked at Scripture. That would be important for me. Because if he held it up here, then I'm going to hold it up here. If he held it down here and said, well, it's kind of interesting—tell a few stories about it—then I treat it like he treats it.

By the way, here's a good passage, as long as we're taking notes and your pen's almost out of ink. Matthew chapter 5, verse 17. Don't turn there, but at least jot it down. Here's Jesus' attitude: "I didn't come to abolish the law." Remember that statement? "I came to fulfill it." See? That's my whole thing. I didn't come to abolish it. I came to fulfill it.

Matthew 22—he says, let me tell you what I think about the Scripture. Here's a bunch of people debating, and they came to him, and you can just imagine this. They try to do this to Jesus all the time.

Pharisees and Sadducees had a different doctrine about the afterlife. So they come to him—both of them are there, both parties represented—and they ask him a question about the afterlife. And they figure, well, you know, we'll have this guy weigh in on the whole thing about the afterlife. Is there a resurrection? Do people live after they die or not? Sadducees said no. Pharisees said yes.

So they get Jesus into this discussion by asking him a question about a wife who has seven husbands. They die consecutively. And when she's resurrected—whose wife is she going to be? Gotcha. So there is no afterlife, right? And the Pharisees are interested to see, well, how is he going to answer this? How is he going to come down on this issue?

Matthew chapter 22, verse 29. Jesus said, "You've stumped me. I don't know." Jesus said, no. "Guys, you're in error because you don't know the Scriptures." Interesting. "You don't know the power of God. At the resurrection, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage, so your question is stupid." I mean, right? That's what he's saying. "They're going to be like the angels in heaven. It's different, man."

Verse 31: "About the resurrection of the dead"—but let's forget new revelation, because that's what he's giving them, because no one knew that. He's telling them that because he's been there. Verse 31 though, he says, "Well, let's just talk about the resurrection of the dead. Have you not read?" Now let's understand if you know Scripture or not. "What God said to you."

Now he's quoting Exodus when Moses is having the dialogue with God through the burning bush. And God, when he talks about who's there, right? He picked up the burning phone and he says, "It's God. It's the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Okay, that was the quote from Exodus 3, I think it is. Now here's Jesus' response: "He's not the God of the dead, but of the living." When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

I know I read that too fast and you didn't catch it, but read it again. "About the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what God said to you?" He said in that dialogue—and you should have understood—there is an afterlife after death because God said to Moses, years after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's lives, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Now hey guys—he's not the God of the dead, is he? He's not the God of dead people. He's the God of living people.

And if, by the way, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dust and gone, and there was no conscious existence after death, then he wouldn't have said, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." What would he have said? "I was the God." All I've got to say is that's amazing. It's amazing. I mean, they were amazed that he answered the question so quickly and succinctly with one verse. But it's amazing to me how he treated the first 39 books of this Bible.

He made a case about what you should know about the afterlife because of the verb "to be." That it wasn't past tense—it was present tense—and you should have been able to recognize the tense of the verb. And I'm thinking to myself, that's not the way most people preach the Bible, right? They're not interested in the tenses of verbs, because that's too heady and confusing. "I don't like that. The sermons are too long when they get into that." I'm sorry. I think Jesus would have us look at this closely. What do you think?

Matter of fact, how about you study the grammar. And you love it when I get into those grammar discussions, don't you? Yes—because God says it's important. As a matter of fact, the book is so important and God speaks so clearly that he's speaking to us in the tense of a verb. I'm thinking, wow—you don't hold this here. You hold this here. That's the way he treated the Scriptures.

How do we treat the Scriptures, by the way? I mean, it's just so important for us on a daily basis that we reflect the value Christ put on that. And then he said to the apostles, "Oh, you're going to go out there and teach things about me I haven't even told you yet. You can't even bear it now, but I'm going to give you information—even information about the future—and you're going to speak on my behalf." Because you're not a disciple anymore. You're an apostle now. All I'm saying is God had a high view of Scripture.

And that text, just like we read in the book of John, is punctuated by God's imprimatur—his authentication—that this is a supernatural book. Who can predict the future? Isaiah 44—nobody but God. And even the New Testament did that with clarity. Whether it was about the destruction of Jerusalem, or the events yet to come, or even the reassembling of Israel. That's a whole other sermon.

Yeah, but you know what? "I read in the beginning of my Bible, Pastor Mike—my Bible says copyright 1978." And you know what? You tell me this book was written by guys that have long since been dead for thousands of years. And so, you know, I played the telephone game. It starts off with "Jimmy went to the zoo and saw a zebra," and by the end the zebra is on the moon or something.

Because the telephone game—when one person tells a person and the other person tells a person and the other—you know, eventually the whole message gets convoluted. You know what I’m talking about, the telephone game? And you know what? If this book that I’m trying to read was copyrighted in 1978, and that book was written by apostles in the first century, you’ve got a lot of room for messed up information. “And you know, the Bible’s been translated so many times, and no one can trust it, and who knows what it really said, and who knows if there even was a Peter. I don’t know. Who can trust it?”

I’m thinking if this is God’s message and it’s that important to him, he would be extra careful through his providential care to make sure there was no doubt that this 1978 translation of the Bible, including the New Testament, would be the accurate reflection of the first-century writings of Peter, James, and John. And you know what? That’s exactly how it works.

The best-attested ancient document—and by that we look at two things as a historian. We look at how many ancient manuscripts reflect, as witnesses, to that original manuscript. And what’s the gap between the earliest extant manuscripts and the original writing? The smaller the gap, the better—because the telephone game goes away. And the more witnesses we have, the better, because we can compare them.

You would be surprised how many things you were forced to read in college that have about three ancient extant manuscripts and have a gap of over 1,500 years. The best one in ancient history is Homer’s *Iliad*. You may have heard this before. Homer’s *Iliad* is the best-attested document we have. It has on file 643 ancient manuscripts that say, “Here are different copies, ancient copies of Homer’s *Iliad*.” The gap between the first and earliest extant manuscript and the writing of Homer’s *Iliad* is 400 years.

If you apply that same test to the New Testament, there’s no comparison. I said that’s the best ancient manuscript—of course, except for the books of the New Testament. The books of the New Testament—we can find, and you can go check it out. This is not like the Book of Mormon. You can go check these documents out. I’ve held second-century manuscripts of the New Testament between two thin sheets of glass at Yale University. Go to the antiquities departments at Ann Arbor, at Yale, at Harvard. Go overseas to the John Rylands Museum. You can find these documents without any question. They’re attested to the second, third, and fourth centuries—no problem.

As a matter of fact, in Magdalen College in Oxford they believe they have a document there that everyone is starting to agree is actually dated to the first century. That’s a small gap. We don’t have time to make these stories up. And how many do we have? Seven hundred? Right? We have over **6,000 ancient manuscripts of the New Testament**.

And that’s just the New Testament. We have more voices and witnesses testifying to what we have in our laps is actually what these guys wrote—and we have a smaller gap than any other document from antiquity. And that’s the way God designed it. So you couldn’t sit back and say, “Well, you know, I don’t know. It’s been translated a lot of times.”

You know how many times my Bible’s been translated? Once. Once. Because we put all those manuscripts on the table. It’s called textual criticism. We figure out exactly what the original text said based on all the witnesses weighing in, and we translate it from Hebrew and Greek one time.

We translate it one time into Spanish, one time into Italian, one time into English. We translate it **one time**. This is not the telephone game. We have a reliable document.

As a matter of fact, there's internal evidence that suggests that this is a miraculous book. And there's external evidence that this is a miraculous book. And I'll bet you even have some subjective testimony that this is a miraculous book. Has this book changed your life? It's changed the whole course of human history. The writer of Hebrews says this in Hebrews 4:12: it is a living and active book, sharper than any two-edged sword, and God's recorded word will change your life. As a matter of fact, it will lay you open before God—to whom we must give an account.

One last passage: Hebrews chapter 6. That was a quote, by the way, of Hebrews chapter 4. Look at Hebrews chapter 6. My question is back to the original issue. A couple weeks ago we were looking at the fact that you cannot drift by the truth. You better grab it. And we said, what is it to grab the truth? What is it? What does God want us to do? What is obedience to the message? We've seen it tonight. Jesus came preaching repentance and faith.

The apostles were teaching repentance and faith. Look at the writer of Hebrews chiding these Christians to grow up. Hebrews chapter 6, verse 1. "Let us leave the elementary teachings." Look at that word. It's so condescending. The elementary teachings. I mean, this is like Christianity 101. "Let us leave therefore the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity." Can we grow up, please? "Not laying again a foundation of"—circle this word—what's the next word? **Repentance** from acts that lead to death. And here's our other word—**faith** in God.

And you can talk about instructions about baptism, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment. Oh man—that's so basic. I hope we can get past that. But you know what? God permitting, we're going to have to do that. We'll let some people catch up and all that. But you know what? We should be past that.

Right now, as we've been preaching through this series—and we've run into it in Romans and we're running into it in Hebrews—people don't even get the basics anymore. Because they don't understand that this is God's message that should be understood with an exactness and a concern for accuracy. When it comes to what does God require when it comes to salvation, they don't even understand the basic commands of repentance and faith.

Something's wrong. And the Bible says that's elementary stuff. And yet you can ask people—go ask your Christian co-workers. "Hey, how do you get right with God? What is salvation?" We don't even know anymore. God forbid that Compass Bible Church people don't know what the gospel is. That we don't know what the whole concept of God's response of repentance and faith is all about. That is the foundational message. He goes on to say you should know more about the Melchizedekian priesthood. "Huh?" We'll get on to that. But let's make sure we have the basics down. When it comes to salvation, you better grab the truth. How do you do that? You repent of your sins and you put your trust in God.

And if you neglect that salvation message—wow—how are we going to escape? If God was so exacting in the Old Testament, when it comes time to ask the question, "What did you do with my Son?" And you say, "Well, you know, I don't know. I walked an aisle, prayed a prayer." He's going to say, "I gave it to you. It was so crystal clear." Repent of your sins and put your trust in Christ.

If that message gets convoluted, we're in big trouble, friends. Do not miss it.



Is it true? I know we just barely scratched the surface, but I'm going to listen to the Bible because it's a supernatural record of Christ and the apostles. I'm going to listen to the apostles because their message was supernaturally attested. I'm going to listen to Christ because his entire life was a supernatural fulfillment of Scripture. If you need more on that, there is a big reading list on the back of the worksheet. You've got a lot to do this week to go a little bit deeper on that.

Let's pray.

God, help us to be real careful with your word. And like Jesus, let us treat it with the utmost respect. Let us approach it with an exacting concern that we get it right—even down to the tense of the verbs. We want to understand the truth.

And God, I'm just ashamed that we are a part of a generation of Christians that, unfortunately, we don't even know what the message of salvation is these days, it seems. God, forgive us. Make it clear. Let us understand it with a kind of clarity, and let us master it with such precision that the counterfeit is quickly rejected.

Oh God, we need your truth. It is the lamp to our feet and the light to our path. And if we neglect it and watch TV more than we read your Bible—if we spend more time on our hobbies than we do seeking and studying the truth, like the Scripture says, digging it out like hidden treasure—then God, we just have trouble. We've got to get back to this.

God, realign our priorities in this busy Orange County life. We are just so sidetracked by so many things. Help us, God, to make your truth the priority of our lives.

And for those that are doubting here today—and I know we all go through seasons of it—and certainly in coming to Christ we should go through a serious period of questioning whether the veracity of this message is solid or not. I pray, God, that you would use this message and allow it to be a catalyst for these people to get into your book, to get into thinking through the credentials of Christ, the authority of the apostles.

And God, I pray that because they've been honest with you and in the beginning of a journey about truth, that we'd see more people in the kingdom of God because they've done business with you and you are drawing them to yourself.

God, I pray that would be a reality. And for us that need to be equipped—as the Scripture says—we need to be ready to give an answer for the hope that's in us, to give an account for it. God, I pray that we'd be more intelligent about our faith. We'd be good students of the word. That we'd be able, like good workmen, to rightly handle the word of truth. Oh God, help us in that regard.

And if there's any doubt about whether this book is true, or these apostles were trustworthy, or Christ was qualified, I pray we'd start to put that to rest right now and begin a season of study and serious contemplation. God, we thank you so much for today and the great freedom we have. Even though it's at a weird place and an odd time and all of that, we're just thankful we can gather as your people and open the word of life and be able to study it together. What a great day it's been.

Thank you for this privilege. In Jesus' name, amen.