The Bible

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Preacher: James Ross

[0:00] please have a seat and just before the boys and girls head out let's pray at the start of this new term for for creche and for junior church lord god we thank you for every boy and girl in our church for those who are able to be here today for those who are at home lord we pray that you would give to each one of them a love for the bible so that they might love you that they might love jesus as lord and savior and lord we pray that as they go to their classes that you would help them to to read and to understand and to be able to put into practice what your word teaches lord thank you for their teachers pray that you would guide them as they look to to love our children to show them by example and by words and what it looks like to be a follower of jesus and we pray for them as we pray for ourselves in jesus name amen so boys and girls can head to their classes and while they are doing that perhaps in your bibles you can turn with me to the gospel of matthew as we spend january thinking about what jesus says about the church and about prayer and today about the bible we're going to use the gospel of matthew to help us in that so we've got three short readings the first from matthew chapter 4 verses 1 to 11 and then chapter 5 and then chapter 12 and the words will also be up on the screen so let's hear god's word then jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil after fasting for 40 days and 40 nights he was hungry the tempter came to him and said if you are the son of god tell these stones to become bread jesus answered it is written man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of god then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the highest point of the temple if you are the son of god he said throw yourself down for it is written he will command his angels concerning you and they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against the stone jesus answered him it is also written do not put the lord your god to the test again the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor all this i will give you he said if you will bow down and worship me jesus said to him away from me satan for it is written worship the lord your god and serve him only then the devil left him and angels came and attended him and then a really short reading from the sermon on the mount chapter 5 at verse 17 so matthew 5 at verse 17 do not think that i have come to abolish the law or the prophets i have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them for truly i tell you until heaven and earth disappear not the smallest letter not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven and then lastly in matthew chapter 12

matthew chapter 12 and at verse 38 where we read then some of the pharisees and teachers of the law said to jesus teacher we want to see a sign from you he answered a wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign but none will be given it except the sign of the prophet jonah for as jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish so the son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth the men of nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it for they repented at the preaching of jonah and now something greater than jonah is here the queen of the south will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to solomon's wisdom and now something greater than solomon is here amen now before we turn back to think about those passages and also to help us in our confession as we look to confess sin together we're going to sing two sections of psalm 38 and we're going to sing from the beginning where we see david confess sin and the misery that it brings and then we'll read from the sing from the end verses 17 to the end where we find david praying that he wouldn't be abandoned that he'd be rescued that he'd be saved and we can pray these words as ours and at the same time we need to recognize that our hope lies again in jesus

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our savior the sinless son of god who took on for us the weight and misery of sin the one who died for our sin entrusting himself to god the one who rose again in victory the one who assures us of forgiveness when our faith is in him so let's stand and sing these two sections from psalm 38 together if you have your bibles perhaps you can keep them open um at matthew's gospel we'll be beginning in chapter four as we think about what jesus says um about the bible so as i said we're going to go back to some of those fundamentals of our faith in january and to think about bible and prayer and mission and church uh just a couple of days ago we began to watch a little bit of naomi osaka the tennis player's documentary and there was there was one or two scenes where you would see nothing but but her constantly hitting the same shot with her coach time and time again as a way to check up on those fundamentals of her swing and to make any corrections that needed to be made and it's important for us as christians as the church to think about our fundamentals in our faith and i think especially in our own times where the world has been out of rhythm for such a long time so have our lives for a variety of reasons and the church again we find ourselves out of our usual kind of rhythms and patterns and it can be really easy to lose disciplines the stuff that that has always been really basic and essential to faith it's really easy to to lose those disciplines and even to lose sight of perhaps why they matter so today you know why does it matter so much that we we're hearing from god in his word so and today i want to ask one really simple but crucial question and it's this what does jesus believe about the bible because when we think about that that simple question what does jesus believe about the bible if we are christians then our instinct should be to believe what he teaches to follow his example and to hold to his view of the word of god and and similarly if we're here today or we're watching online we're not christians again this is a great starting point and when we have questions about the bible and about christianity what does jesus say about the bible so so three points that we're going to consider today from those different passages one we're going to think about the authority of the bible we're going to consider the fact that the bible in jesus view is unbreakable and thirdly to think about the fact that in jesus view the bible is reliable so matthew chapter 4 thinking about the bible has authority so here we find ourselves right at the beginning of jesus public ministry and he's just been baptized the spirit has come down and the father has said at the end of chapter 3 this is my son whom i love with him i am well pleased so he's been blessed and now he's going to be tested this is a pattern that we see in the bible adam first man created and blessed he was tested in the garden and he failed uh israel was blessed they were chosen and saved to become god's people they were tested in the wilderness and they failed but jesus son of god he is blessed he is tested and we see that he succeeds now jesus of course when he is tempted has a unique calling the devil recognizes that saying if you are or since you are the son of god so jesus is the son of god and he must live as the son of god so there's something unique about the temptation that jesus faces but when we think about how jesus succeeds and that he trusts the authority of the bible he looks to submit to it and to obey it we recognize that his resource in resisting temptation is our resource too god's written and unchanging word of truth is our authority and is our defense when we find ourselves being tempted so if we are to resist temptation and to honor god we must both love and live by god's word and we see that in the life of jesus so let's look really briefly at these three temptations the first one if you are the son of god tell these stones to become bread attempted on the matter of provision we can imagine as it were the devil saying jesus as the son of god why not use your power and your rights to provide for your needs why not ensure that you have comfort and how does jesus respond and responding from the book deuteronomy man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of god bread is not of first importance the physical life is not of first importance god's word is our spiritual lives are of first importance notice jesus says every word that comes from the mouth of god so the whole bible not just parts of it the whole bible is food for our soul and notice too that it comes from the mouth of god so what the bible says god says and it's so important for us to recognize as we come to the word of god what the bible says god says to us the second temptation sees the devil take jesus up to the highest point of the the temple and here the issue at stake seems to be protection if you're the son of god throw yourself down and then he quotes sam 91 he'll commend command his angels they'll lift you up in their hands so you'll not strike your foot against the stone jesus the bible says the angel's job is to care for you so why not jump off the temple to prove it and how does jesus respond jesus answered it's also written do not put the lord your god to the test what do we see in jesus jesus trusts his father jesus will not manipulate his father jesus doesn't need a dramatic demonstration of

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the care of god he instinctively trusts it he's not going to test his god and it also shows that for jesus the bible is consistent one part is not going to disagree with another part and then the final temptation from verse 8 is on this the subject of power the devil takes jesus to a very high mountain and in his mind's eye sees all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory and the devil says jesus don't you want a world empire imagine what it'd be like if you ruled imagine the peace and the justice all you need the price you need to pay is simply to bow down and worship me and again jesus said to him away from me satan for it is written third time he quotes from deuteronomy worship a lord your god and serve him only because the word of god calls for the exclusive worship and honor of god he will not pursue his kingdom in a way that dishonors his god the ends do not justify the means jesus will not take a shortcut to his kingdom he will not avoid suffering and the cross so here at the beginning of jesus ministry what are we seeing from jesus we're seeing that he submits his will his mind his heart to the word of god to hearing it to to learning from it to be able to recall it and to apply it when he is tempted jesus believes god is the author of scripture and that god's word has authority and so he submits to it in his life now let's just think before we move on why does this matter for for you and me today why does it make bible reading of vital importance for you and i today well if we go right to a comparison we need to recognize that just as jesus was tempted we too will be tempted and when we are we need god's word in our lives just as jesus was tempted to personal comfort don't we find sometimes that we are tempted to pursue our own comfort rather than costly obedience to follow the path of least resistance as christians sometimes aren't we sometimes tempted to demand personal security and health and well-being from god rather than confident trust in him regardless of circumstance aren't we tempted to want personal glory rather than committing to worship god and giving him the glory and aren't we tempted each and every day towards sin towards disobedience and so we need to learn to submit to the authority of the bible and we need to be hearing the bible so we're reminding ourselves always of the glory of god of the sinfulness in our own hearts of the wonder of the gospel of the joy of forgiveness of the spirit who's at work in us to enable us to obey so we need the bible because we will be tempted and we also need to recognize the authority of the bible because we're always choosing what we're giving attention to because we know don't we that in our own lives there are so many competing values and so many competing voices on any number of issues and subjects and there's always the question of what voice are we going to listen to whose word carries the most weight in our own hearts and lives

will it be the messages of popular culture will it be the opinions of my peer group or will it be the personal living speaking god and perhaps to make it really practical think about this morning think about a typical morning which do we reach for first is it the word of god or is it our phones sometimes how we begin the day sets the tone for our day so it's good to begin the day hearing god and his word to think about which word we reflect on most which values are most a part of how we live day by day so jesus shows us the bible has authority and i turn over with me to chapter 5 and at verse 17 to recognize that in jesus understanding the bible is unbreakable it can be helpful to to ask ourselves the question to reflect on how strong is my confidence in the bible and when i approach god's word whatever section we're in old testament or new testament do i think it is reliable or unreliable do i think of it as unchanging or does it always need to change in light of the culture we find ourselves in when we have questions about god and about faith is it the authority to answer those questions or are we going to be going on to youtube or looking to some popular expert who might give us an alternative view in christians and churches sometimes we can be apologetic i think we could be defensive we can we can run away from questions about the authority of the bible or the reliability of the bible our confidence in the bible but when we listen to the words of jesus and you can go through matthew's gospel you see lots of jesus view on scripture and if we if we trust him and if we listen to those words it's going to give us confidence because jesus has no doubt that god's word is unbreakable and god's word is unchanging and that too when we think about how jesus thinks about the bible is going to motivate us to read so as to obey because we know that this is our standard and it's not going to change we don't need to adapt it to fit our culture point one to think about here when jesus talks about the bible being unbreakable let's think about his understanding that his mission is to fulfill scripture the word of god as it is in the old testament verse 17 do not think that i have come to abolish the law or the prophets i have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them so when he says the law and the prophets it's a way of thinking about the whole old testament and he says he's not come to abolish them to set them aside as some of his critics thought he was doing rather he's come to fulfill them so let's think about how does jesus fulfill the

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law and the prophets well we read the gospels we discover he fulfills the whole moral law he fulfills that first of all in his teaching so we're at the beginning towards the beginning of the sermon on the mount and what jesus is about to do in the next section for the rest of chapter 5 and into chapter 6 is he is about to remind the people that the law is a matter of heart it's a matter of motive it's not some kind of tip box exercise it's not just superficial legalism no it's about our heart attitude towards god and towards his word and so jesus fulfills it in his teaching but jesus also fulfills the whole moral law in his life so remember jesus summarizes the whole law in two ways one love the lord your god with all your heart soul mind and strength
[20:21] and two love your neighbor as yourself we read the gospels isn't that what we discover in jesus one who was determined always to to obey to honor to glorify his father even to the point of his dying on the cross and don't we see him so readily loving others at great cost to himself loving the least loving the outcast loving the sick loving those who were needing spiritual teaching they were like sheep without a shepherd so jesus in his life in his words in his actions fulfills the whole moral law jesus also fulfills the whole moral law in his death because one of the things that the law is really clear on is that the wages of sin is death that sin must be punished offenses against a holy god must be dealt with and jesus comes as a substitute and what we see on the cross is the penalty that sin deserves what we see is jesus going under the curse that sin and rebellion deserves and jesus isn't doing that because he has done anything wrong rather he is taking the sins of his people so he fulfills the moral law in his death but not just in taking the penalty but also in being that great sacrifice to atone for sin all those sacrifices in the old testament that speak of forgiveness that speak of peace with god point towards the great sacrifice of god sending his son jesus to be that once for all sacrifice for sin so he fulfills the law in his teaching in his life and his death and he also fulfills what the old testament anticipates and promises sacrifices sometimes people think about the old testament as promise and the new testament the coming of jesus as fulfillment so we talked about sacrifices the promise of sacrifice is fulfilled in jesus forgiveness from god through the sacrifice of his son the old testament emphasis on the temple the place where we can meet with god and jesus says i am god with you i am the way to meet with god all the kings that we read about in the bible speaking to us of the one great king who would rule in perfect righteousness forever the seed promised to adam who would crush the head of the serpent the seed promised to abraham who would be blessing to the nations that's jesus all those rich promises anticipating a messiah who would come from god with the authority of god but he would die as a suffering servant before rising and returning to glory it's jesus and so jesus reads the old testament he says this is all about me and that too informs how we read especially how we read the old testament we're looking to find jesus on every page so jesus mission is about fulfillment but then if you look at verses 18 and 19 of chapter 5 we see that jesus understands the bible to be permanently valid really strong words from jesus verse 18 for truly i tell you until heaven and earth disappear not the smallest letter not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished now compare that with an article yesterday talking about the the stress and the exhaustion that people are facing as they're dealing with as we are dealing with never-ending covid laws and regulations and restrictions i compare that with god's word jesus saying all of god's word

is more permanent than the universe all scripture is permanently valid this is bedrock this is unchanging for us jesus is addressing in a sense the misunderstandings of the pharisees one of the things the pharisees did was they divided into heavy and light laws they decided which ones to prioritize jesus says all the law matters every part matters and not just the externals but also the heart how helpful is this when we sort of think about the time that we live many modern thinkers writers if there's a clash of culture and cultural values with the bible then of course for them culture always wins but when jesus says the bible is all truth and the bible is always truth then for us as christians we need to say that the bible always wins some principles that follow when we think about culture and the bible we need to have humility recognizing that god's word is not broken but that we are beginning personally but before we think about the society that we live in it's my assumptions my culture my pride my prejudice my ignorance that needs to be confronted not god's word and so when jesus says the bible is unbreakable that needs our humility let's think about commitment to the bible as well because here is one place where jesus would clearly reject any concept of a pick and mix approach to the bible a pick and choose approach to the bible you will read scholars you will hear people in culture say well i really like the sermon on the mount or i like the love commands i'm not so keen on on this part not so keen on what jesus says about sexual

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ethics or about marriage if the bible is unbreakable and unchanging and jesus said it was then we must humbly submit to it all and seek to obey those parts that we naturally agree with and those parts that challenge us and confront us and make us address our assumptions and to think too about christ and the bible there was an old minister in london i think in the 19th century who said that just as all roads in england eventually lead to london so all the old testament themes ultimately lead to christ i think one of the most helpful things that we can we can ask as we come to an old testament section of the bible is to ask ourselves how does this anticipate the life of jesus the ministry of jesus the words of jesus as jesus himself taught his disciples that that he is what the whole scripture is about we need to be looking for him on every page but we also need to be looking to jesus to understand what heart obedience looks like so as we said in the next section of the sermon on the mount jesus is going to say that that command about murder isn't just about murder it's also about anger because it's a matter of the heart that command about adultery isn't just about adultery it's also about lust because it's a matter of the heart and so we need to be looking to jesus to know what true obedience looks like so the bible is unbreakable the last section we're going to look at is that little section we read in matthew 12 and to think about the fact that the bible is unbreakable

nope we thought about that already the bible is reliable ever since the 19th century i guess with the rejection of miracles rejection of the supernatural begun to come increasing criticism of the bible and old testament history and challenges raised over whether we can trust it but those challenges aren't just reserved for old books or modern books we have probably had some of those challenges perhaps from our friends or from our family can you really believe in the historical Adam that we all come from Adam and Eve perhaps we will have questions about some of those dramatic events of the old testament maybe the story of Noah or the story of Jonah as we'll think about there are questions about the general reporting and the accuracy can we really trust what an oral culture has to say and again as Christians and as churches it can be easy for us to feel like we're on the defensive it can be easy to perhaps feel embarrassed or to lose confidence and that again is why we need to hear Jesus if we're going to be those who live by the word of God we need to have confidence that is reliable and so it's really helpful again to listen to Jesus in Matthew 12 because for him biblical history is history you can go through all the gospels and you will never find Jesus ever question a historical figure a historic event a historic miracle that's recorded in the old testament that's our basis for confidence Jesus believed it so I can believe it too which takes us to Matthew 12 and perhaps the classic objection that people might have when it comes to old testament stories surely you can't really believe in Jonah being swallowed by a giant fish well in reply we can say well Jesus did look at those words Matthew 12 verse 39 a wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign but none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah and now listen as Jesus compares the situation of Jonah with what's coming in his own life for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish so the son of man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth just as Jonah was in the belly Jesus would be buried

Jesus is saying Jonah's history is as real as my story and so when we are met with lots of skepticism about the reliability of the Bible that one place we can go as Christians is to the opinion of Jesus you know who am I going to trust am I going to trust Jesus or am I going to trust an expert writing some two thousand years after Jesus and if there was any doubt about how Jesus sees Jonah as a historical figure he then moves on to talk about the queen of the south or the queen of Sheba the queen of the south will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom and now something greater than Solomon is here Jonah is historical just as the queen of Sheba is historical Jesus uses Old Testament history to point towards himself and his message there came with a challenge remember

[32:06] Nineveh Jesus says they really repented at the real message of the real Jonah Jesus says to the crowds and by extension says to us have we repented have we believed in have we listened to and trusted in the one greater than Jonah who is Jesus says of the queen of Sheba she moved heaven and earth to listen to real wisdom from the real king Solomon but what about us are we living by the greater wisdom of that greater king king Jesus are we listening to him in his word so in conclusion knowing what Jesus believes about the Bible should help us as we turn to read it and to hear it you know just as tennis players often return to their coaches to make sure the fundamentals of their swing are right we should regularly return to Jesus our master to think is my view on the

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Bible right and not just is my theory about it right but am I living by God's word am I prioritizing it in my life wouldn't it be wonderful to share Jesus view of the Bible to share his heart for it you know Jesus said God's word has authority and he loved it and he submitted to it and he obeyed it Jesus said God's word is unbreakable and so he came on a mission to fulfill it and to show us what true heart obedience looks like Jesus said God's word is reliable and he had full confidence in it he received it as the voice of God and he understood that it all pointed to him and his great work of redemption and so as we look to establish fundamentals as
Christians and as a church surely this is something to be so basic for us to be reading God's words one or two practical suggestions maybe this is the time for some of us to start building or rebuilding habits when it comes to Bible reading to set aside time so that we're hearing we're reading every day that we would make that time that we would have that self discipline to prioritize time in God's word if that means going to bed a little earlier or getting up a little bit earlier so that we have that bit of time regular time to be with God to think about our own patterns our own habits how we typically work best so that we would know for ourselves when be a good time for us to try and build in time with God's word and that connected with the word of God we'd be praying about it that we would want our hearts to have that hunger for the word of
God that we wouldn't be just opening it so that we can tick our box and say well we've done our duty because we've read our Bibles that we'd want to meet with God in his word we'd want to be filled with joy we'd want to have strength for the day as we find God in his word that we'd pray that we'd have a heart like Jesus that we would submit to the bits we find easy and the bits we find hard that we would ask God to open our eyes that we would see wonderful things in the word of God that the same spirit who inspired the Bible would light it up for us so that we would see it we would understand it we'd apply it we'd obey it that we'd be like that wise man from the end of the sermon on the mount who built his house on the rock the rock of Jesus and his word that it would be strength for us it would be strength for our families it would be strength for our church our life would be built on the word of God now let's pray together
Lord our God we want to give you thanks that your word is true that it is reliable that it is unchanging that it is life giving that in your word we discover the gospel of your grace towards us in sending Jesus as our savior and so we pray that you'd help us to trust your word to make time to read your word and a will and a desire to live by your word we confess that so often we don't do the things that we want to do we confess that we know in theory how vital the bible is for our church and for our lives but so often we find ourselves slow to make time for it we can find ourselves so distracted we can find other things far more easy to get into than we find to come to church or to read our bibles
[37:22] Lord we confess our hard hearts and we pray that you would give us that desire to read that you would give us that understanding so that we would hear from you and know what you are saying to us Lord we pray for our country we remember that Scotland was once known as the people of the book Lord we realise how few people today read the bible how few really know who Jesus is how little biblical literacy there is Lord we pray that you would renew and revive and we pray that you would give a hunger for your word and we thank you for organisations like the Bible Society and for Scripture Union and for Christian unions and for those who look to encourage Bible reading Lord we pray for the nation of Kazakhstan which we have seen in the news recently we think of them in the chaos and unrest we think too of your people there knowing that there is real persecution for the significant

Christian minority as they don't have freedom of worship as those who convert to Christianity from Muslim backgrounds can find themselves isolated or imprisoned Lord give them a steadfast confidence in your word in Jesus the word who became flesh and made his dwelling among us that he would show the glory of salvation so that people would believe and have life Lord we pray for every nation that is enduring persecution and trouble because of their faith help them to know and to live by your word of truth Lord we pray today for those in our church who find themselves in special need Lord may you grant wisdom may you grant comfort may you give encouragement as we need it Lord for those who are seeking you for those who are not yet
Christians may they read your word and may you reveal yourself and your love and your way of salvation through faith in Jesus to them break down barriers we pray Lord we pray for those who find that their faith is weak who perhaps have lost those basic spiritual disciplines through Covid or other circumstances Lord please gently restore and renew to folks the joy of their salvation Lord all

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this we pray in Jesus name Amen Now by way of reflecting on what we've been thinking about our closing hymn is Speak O Lord quick book review before we finish not a book review if you want a good book on why the Bible is worth knowing trusting and loving Kevin DeYoung Taking God at His Word nice and short really good read you can have a flick if you want after let's stand and let's sing together
Speak O Lord

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