

2 Peter 1:19-21

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[0:00] Amen. Well, good morning, church. Good morning, friends. Okay. Let's try it just one more time.

! Okay. Let's try it just one more time. Good morning, church. Okay. There we go. There we go. One more brief announcement of something upcoming. You have about a month. If you want to participate in our book discussion on November 13th, it's a Thursday evening. We gather out here in the foyer.

We have a meal, and then we have a book discussion. And right now we are reading The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis. And I would encourage you, this might be the third or fourth time I'm reading it, and it's just as good. It gets even better. So I want to encourage you, if you need to start doing more reading and less watching, this would be a great book.

You have a month. And so I want to encourage you with that. All right. Turn open to 2 Peter. We're going to be in chapter 1, looking at verses 19 to 22. So we're going to finish the chapter this morning. Let me pray, and then spend time in God's Word together. Join me now.

Lord, we love the words of the psalmist where he reminds us that the law of the Lord is perfect, and it revives the soul. That the testimonies of the Lord are sure, and they make wise the simple.

[1:40] The precepts of the Lord are right. They rejoice the heart. The commandments of the Lord are pure. They enlighten our eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether, and they're actually more desirable than gold, even fine gold.

Lord, this morning we come asking that you would feed us on your Word. Lord, that indeed our eyes would enlighten, that we would become more wise. And Lord, in the midst of it, you would revive our souls.

Lord, we want to not just feast on your Word, but we want to meet with you. And so Lord, I pray that you would be in our midst this morning, and you would be working in hearts.

Lord, you would be ministering uniquely and specifically to every individual, whatever the need may be. And so Lord, we cry out for that. We ask for that. Holy Spirit, would you empower me this morning? Pray that I have clarity of thought, unction, and would proclaim well your perfect Word, Lord. We commit our time to you and delight that we get to begin our week in this act of worship. So we pray all this in your name, Jesus, and all those people said, amen. Amen. Have you ever had just a really good week with the Lord? Like just maybe you got to do some ministry, you experienced the Lord in some remarkable way. Maybe you got a chance to share the gospel with a friend, and you're kind of on a spiritual high. And you think about those occasions, and they're so good, and then maybe following that, all of a sudden, you deny the Lord in some significant way.

[3:35] And you're like, what's going on here? And I just want to say you're not alone. That's Peter. He's the author of the letter that we're examining together. He experienced the power of God in his life, and he experienced the joy of serving the Lord, being used greatly of the Lord.

We know in Acts chapter 2, he preached a sermon, 3,000 people repent, and they're saved. I mean, that's a good day of ministry. It's interesting, people are beginning to know who he is, and by Acts 5, in fact, it says like, his shadow passes by, and people wrongly, superstitiously think, well, if his shadow can pass me by and touch me, I'll be healed. But he's the guy, he's the ministry guy in his day, and yet he also failed. In fact, Paul says to him in Galatians 2, verse 11 says, when Cephas, and Peter in the Aramaic, when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face.

He was compromising the purity of the gospel, telling those that were non-Jews that they needed to behave like Jews, and he got confronted. And it's interesting to me that that failure followed on enormous successes. And so I believe that the burden Peter has for us as he's written this letter is,

man, I fell on occasion, and I don't want you to fall as well, any of you to fall. Peter is vastly human. And so as we read the words that he's penned, I don't want us to dismiss the words as though, well, these are for the elite soldiers. No, this letter is for every enlisted man or woman in God's army. Amen? So let's take to heart the words that he shared. This morning, Scott touched on on the section that we're going to be considering, but we're going to look at it in a little further detail, and we're actually going to finish chapter 1 today. So it's going to be a good morning. Let's begin here. 2 Peter chapter 1, verses 19 to 21. And Peter writes, and when we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Now recall, Peter, he has been instructing these Christians on belief. And his point is that belief should actually translate into something, into action. Radical belief should translate into radical behavior. And we saw that a couple weeks back, verse 5, where he says, hey, supplement to your faith, virtue, like furnish your life with the things of God, self-control, steadfastness, godliness. Your belief, it should fuel a transforming life. Amen? That makes sense. Well, last week, as Scott taught, Peter was seeking to undergird our belief in the reality of God, the fact that He is going to return. We will meet Him face to face, whether that's by our going or His return, whichever comes first. And Peter assured us that this belief, this faith, this is solid. This is real. This is not a fairy tale. Or as he wrote in verse 16, it's not a cleverly devised myth.

[7:38] And then he went on to give us two proofs or two buttresses in terms of why we should believe that this is indeed the truth. And so he gave us these two proofs. Last week, we really focused on the first, and we'll focus more on the second. But the first proof that he gave us was, hey, I actually had a personal experience with Jesus. Not only did I walk with Him for three years, but then I was an eyewitness to His majesty. And recall, Peter had this really unique experience. We call it on the Mount of Transfiguration. We're not exactly sure which mountain, but one near Caesarea Philippi.

And this experience is recorded in Matthew 17. It's also in the other synoptics. And Peter basically says, hey, I saw Jesus in all His glory. This is true. Our belief in Him, this is real. And in fact, it says in Matthew 17, verse 2, it says, and He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, it says. That's crazy. I mean, did Peter see that coming? Hey, we're going to go up, we're going to go up this mountain. He's like, okay. And then all of a sudden, he sees the Lord in all His glory. And I think there's an important question that we should ask ourselves, what was that about? Like, does this point behind? Does this point ahead? And I think a reasonable question is, when did the second person of the triune Godhead attach himself to human flesh, where he actually had a physical face? And I would say, well, the incarnation, right? Christmas is coming. We're going to celebrate that. But I think that tells us, answering that question tells us the revelation of Jesus with a transfigured, upgraded body is not looking backwards. It's not looking into eternity past. It's actually looking where? Forward. Yeah. It's a sneak peek into,

I believe, the new heavens and the new earth. This is our future selves. This is what we're seeing here as our future king. And I think this experience, we get a glimpse actually in our promise tomorrow. That we too, like Jesus, whose face shone like the sun, it says in Matthew 13, 43 actually, that ours will shine like the sun in the kingdom of our Father. Or it says, therefore, the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father. He who has an ear, let him hear. And I think Peter and the others got this little sneak peek into what lies ahead for us, which is super cool, friends, because you saw Jesus in his earthly body. And yet for like a little snapshot, you get to see him in his glorified body. You know what that means? That means heaven, we're not disembodied spirits, friends. We have bodies. And our face is going to shine probably as a reflection from the king who's shining. But I love this, that heaven is more substantive, that it's actually more real than what we experience today. I think Lewis does a great job, not in this book, but in *The Great Divorce*, where he sort of paints this picture of gravity, unlike our present experience, right? That our present selves couldn't even stand to be in heaven quite yet, because even the grass would hurt our feet. It's more substantial, dare I say, more real.

And so we live, as Lewis states, we really do live in the shadowlands, a place of suffering. Today we still live in a place of difficulty. In heaven there is no difficulty. We live in a place of heartache. But the day is coming when all of this will be a distant memory. And so for Peter, the transfiguration

was this experience that settled this in his soul. It's real. It's the really real.

And so his exhortation to us is, so then live out your days as though it is so. Maybe somebody chides you that, oh, the gospel is fairytale. You worship Jesus. Friends, don't back down. Don't back down. That's when I'm driving an Uber and people say the name of Jesus, I'm always then finishing the sentence. If you say Jesus Christ from the back seat in the front seat, I'm going to say, is the best. And it happens every time. Jesus Christ is the best. And then they're like, I don't know what to do with that. But I'm not going to say Jesus Christ again. Because then I would have to say it's the best a second time. Don't back down. It's the real. I drove a fellow Friday night who was impressed by my vehicle. And he's like, man, this is a great car. He just got off his shift, bartender type. And he's like, man, we should go out and pick up some girls.

[12:47] I already told my wife this. Don't worry. It was a quote of the night. And I responded, I said, no, we should go to church together. And then it just got sort of quiet.

It's the real. We don't have to be embarrassed. The gospel is true. And Peter's trying to tell us, it's so true. Guys, I had this experience where I saw the risen Christ. I saw like the kingly Christ. Man, we have good days to look ahead. Our faith, it's true. This morning, we're going to zero in then on the second proof for our belief.

Second reason we know that it's true is really it's God's inspired word. Okay? It's the book that you hold in your hand. It's a second proof of why our belief is solid. And this is what Peter says in verse 19. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention, as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Now, Peter here is not saying there's something more reliable than the experience he just had near Caesarea Philippi, Mount of Transfiguration. I don't think he's drawing like a comparison between God's word and experience. Okay? I don't think that's the argument that he's making here. I think he's actually saying the prophetic word, Scripture, it's demonstrated true due to the highly unusual experience I just had on the mountain. Now, how did that experience verify or confirm Scripture? Primarily the words of the Old Testament at this time. It did so because the entire Old Testament points to who? Jesus. It's okay. You're at church. You can say Jesus. And I'll say, is the best. It points to Jesus, the coming King. He will rule forever in the new heavens and the new earth. In fact, Jesus said that the Old Testament was a book about Him. So that experience, where Peter's on the mountain, he sees the rhythm of Jesus, like, oh, that confirms everything that was said in the Old Testament, pointing to Him as the one that's going to come. The snake crusher promised in Genesis 3.15, oh, this is the guy, and He's going to rule forever. And it just, it built up His faith. And we have a couple of really important Scriptures I'm going to share with you right now. This is as Jesus is on the road to Emmaus. These two verses, I want you to think of, like, here's the key to understanding the Old Testament, okay? And Jesus gives us the key. How should we read the Old Testament? Well, Luke 24.27, and beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He, Jesus, interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. So what's the Old Testament about?

[16:11] It's about Jesus. And then He goes on in Luke 24.44, He says, Then He said to them, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Peter had this experience. I saw the risen Christ. Man, all those words in the Old Testament, they were talking about Jesus. It's true. It's true. Peter got this sneak peek at the glorified King Jesus. Man, God's Word is true from Genesis to the end. And in fact, what Peter says is, it's a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

God's Word is a lamp to our path, friends. Amen? Yeah. We need it. We're dependent on it until the day dawns. Now, what's that about? We're talking about now the return of Christ, where the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. This hope that we have has come to fruition. This is the return of Christ. We need God's Word until the King returns. And it's sort of a little bit of a cryptic reference to the second coming, like who's the morning star? Again, we're at church. The answer is Jesus, okay? Jesus is the morning star, Revelation 22, 16. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star. It's pretty clear. He says, I'm the bright morning star. That's what Peter's talking about here. Now, for some of you, and I've heard this, critics will come and say, oh, well, I thought Satan, he was also considered the morning star or given a similar title. And he was. In Isaiah 14, 12, King of Babylon, but I think it's allusion to Satan, says, how you have fallen from heaven, oh,

day star, son of dawn. How are you cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low? So what's the deal here? Are Jesus and Satan the same person? I've had these conversations with atheists that want to say, oh, well, you're worshiping Satan because they're both the bright morning star. Why would they receive a similar description? And friends, don't let this shake you, please. Morning star is not the only description applied to both Jesus and Satan.

For instance, Revelation 5, verse 5, Jesus is referred to as the Lion of Judah. 1 Peter 5, 8, Satan is compared to a lion seeking to devour. They're both described as lions, yet in very different ways. Jesus is a lion in that he is the king. Satan is lion-like in his destructive actions towards believers. Please, when you read God's Word, context dictates and it actually differentiates those titles. So getting back to bright morning star, what is a bright morning star? It's a star that outshines all the others. It's a star planet that can be seen even as the sun rises. Satan, perhaps, the most beautiful of God's creation, probably the most powerful of the angels, was a bright morning star who is now deceiving. Jesus, God in the flesh, the Lord of the universe, is the bright morning star.

He's the most holy, powerful light in all the universe. In fact, Paul says in 1 Timothy 6, 16, that God dwells in unapproachable light. But I love this image that Peter uses to connect the light of Jesus and the light of His Word together. They're both light.

[20 : 27] If this book tells us about the greatest light in all the universe, then it is a lamp unlike any other.

And Peter is telling us, hey, we need it. We need the prophetic Word. We need God's Word while it's still dark. And friends, the world is dark, and I would say it's ever-increasing in the darkness of sin.

I think as these last days continue, you just continue to see it more and more. And if you are naively believing that things are getting better, join me on a Friday and Saturday night and sit along as I drive people off to their choices of sin for the evening. Friday night, two moms talking about their children and then talking about all the things that they were going to put inside their bodies that were from the earth, whether they were smoking or eating or drinking, and they just planned to be intoxicated all night. And then they were going to get up the next morning and do some sort of charity event. They said, oh, and there's mimosas there and we'll just stay drunk for the entire weekend. These were moms. Like these were young moms. This is like the depravity of man. It's just on full display in all my professions as both pastor and driver. Things are not getting better. How are we going to survive the night? Well, how does a child? They have a nightlight, right? That's their salvation. I got a nightlight. I'm getting older. I'm going back to nightlights.

I otherwise hit walls. And I love this metaphor of God's word. It's a light, right? We're totally dependent on it to navigate a godless world, right? Psalm 119, your word's a lamp to my feet, a light to my path. Without light, we will wander and we will squander many wasteful days away in this life. One of the most tragic conversations I had with a seminary friend of mine who was older gentleman when I was taking coursework, he had lived his career life and he was a believer the whole time and he just shared this with the class one day and said, you know what? I leaned the ladder of my life against the wrong building. I thought that purpose and meaning was me building a business and he owned multiple car lots and was very successful. He says, I squandered my days.

I didn't use my life to minister to anyone. And he had basically cashed out and said, Lord, even at 65, if you could like retrain and use me, like I want to be used of you. And it's not to say that we all need to be pastors because then if we're all pastors, then me and Scott are unnecessary.

[23 : 22] So, but we're ministers, every one of us. And there's people that God wants to use you to be his spokesman, his voice. You're an ambassador, every one of us. And we don't want to squander days.

We want to stay on mission, stay on point, use our days well. We're his workmanship. And maybe you're thinking, well, Jay, I read God's word. In fact, I've read it. I don't need to keep reading it. And I would just say, man, this is where the doctrine of illumination comes in. Okay?

First Corinthians, Paul says this in chapter 2, verse 12. Now, when we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given to us by God.

And I believe God has given us his spirit and he works in tandem with God's word every time we read. It's that ministry of illumination. One of the things that we talked about in our discipleship classes this morning, we were, you know, we're finishing up Hosea. And I've been chewing on this phrase from Hosea 11, verse 4, for like a number of days where God says, man, I led you with

cords of kindness. And it was like the spirit just kept ministering this phrase to me because I have these conversations all the time where people say, man, God, what he's asking of me is too hard. His commandments are burdensome. I can't do them. I can't do them. And then, and he's a killjoy. And yet the phrase that Hosea used, like they're actually, God's restraints are his kindness to us. [25:01] It's just like, that was a spirit sort of working that, that passage over in me. That's the, that's the spirit of illumination. And I believe the Lord does that. Holy Spirit does that with all of us.

Now, Peter then wants to now emphasize why a life saturated in God's word versus all the other books we could spend our time in is mission critical. And this is what he says beginning here in verse 20 and 21. He says, knowing this, first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. It's critical for our faith, friends, because the book is God actually communicating with each of us. So the ideas in this book, friends, the exhortations, the prophecies, they didn't originate in the mind or the imagination of man, but rather in God's.

God is the ultimate author of this book. And it says here that the human authors were what? Carried along by the Holy Spirit. Now that's a nautical metaphor. A sailing vessel. It only moves if the wind feels it sails. No power? Because then there's no wind. Who's the power? The wind is the power. Verses 20 to 21, they are really about the doctrine of inspiration, which Scott shared with us last week. That's different than the doctrine of illumination. The key difference between the two of those is what the Holy Spirit does between author and text and text and reader. Illumination happens between text and reader as we read. Inspiration happens between author and text. So what does that mean? That means that this book is the inspired Word of God. Whether you decide to read it or not, it does not become inspired when you happen to open it up. It is. Even if you decide to ignore this book your entire life, it's still God's Word because it's inspired and inspiration occurred between author and text.

Let me give us a definition of inspiration. Since Scott said I would, and I'm going to quote somebody far smarter than me, J.I. Packer. This is his definition of inspiration.

[27:58] It is a supernatural, providential influence of God's Holy Spirit upon the human authors, which caused them to write what he wished to be written for the communication of revealed truth to others. I'm going to read it one more time. A supernatural, providential influence of God's Holy Spirit upon the human authors, which caused them to write what he wished to be written for the communication of revealed truth to others. Now, maybe the question is, well, how did this work, Jay? How did inspiration actually work? And what does Peter tell us? Well, it worked by men being carried along. They were moved by, there was something dynamic in the process.

They were moved by God's Spirit. And was it the same for every single one of them as they were penning words of Scripture? No. You have some that had dreams. They penned them down. Daniel. You had some carried along as they're writing poetry, writing out prayers. David. Or maybe they're writing a letter to a church. That's how Paul did it. There's some dictation, right? God gave the Ten Commandments.

Moses just transcribed those. You read Revelation 2 and 3 to John. It says, write these words to the seven churches. I'm going to give you exactly right. Here it is. And that was dictation. And I think that's interesting because it actually tells us something. It tells us that at least in some cases, the writers actually knew they were writing Scripture. Now, I think the prophets knew every time they wrote, thus says the Lord. Pretty clear, right? That happens about 400 times. I think they knew. Now, folks didn't always know. I love the example in John 11, 49 to 51, where Caiaphas says, it is better for you that one man should die for the people. That was prophecy. He didn't know he was prophesying.

He spoke far better than he thought, which is pretty cool. Additionally, as we think about this doctrine of inspiration, it was not the writers that were inspired. It was the words they penned. Paul wrote other things. No doubt Peter wrote other things. Not all of those things were inspired. The words they penned. They originated in the heart of God, which means the book that we have is actually God communicating to us very personal things about himself. And in fact, another key text that we probably know if we've studied this doctrine, 2 Timothy 3, 16, all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

[31:03] All Scripture, all Scripture is breathed out by God. This Greek word for breathed out by God, theonoustos, it just means God breath. It's a unique word. Paul coined this word, perhaps. It's

the only time it shows up in the New Testament. Okay? Scott can coin words, we're hopefulists, and Paul coined a word, God breathed. But the emphasis is what? On the origin of Scripture. It's from God's heart.

Now, Peter may have had the Old Testament primarily in mind when he used the word Scripture, as did Paul in 2 Timothy 3. But Peter's view was already expanding to include the New Testament as well.

So you might have some, like, critics say, well, Scripture, only the Old Testament's inspired. But what we see here is actually, you know what? They had in mind that the canon was expanding to include the New Testament.

And Peter actually says this in 2 Peter 3, verse 15, where he says, And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters.

There are some things in them that are hard to understand. This is totally Peter's personality. I love that. Paul's too smart. Simmer down, Paul. Which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, catch this, as they do the other Scriptures. So what's Peter doing there? He's placing Paul's writings on par with Old Testament Scriptures. They're twisting Paul's letters just like they twisted the rest of the Old Testament. So Peter's view of what Scripture contains, it's expanding. Oh, it includes the epistles. It includes Paul's letters. But you know what?

[33:08] Just like Peter, Paul was doing the same thing in his understanding of what fell into the category of Scripture, because he says this in 1 Timothy 5.18. For the Scripture says, You shall not muzzle the ox when it treads out the grain, and the laborer deserves his wages.

Paul is calling what Scripture? Well, he says, You shall not muzzle the ox. That's from Deuteronomy 25, verse 4. But then he says, And the laborers deserve its wages. That's from Luke 10.7. So what's Paul doing here? He's saying, Hey, the Gospels, I see them as Scripture as well. This is so cool, friends. I hope that you're getting a little excited. You know, and I get it. Much of what I'm sharing with you all this morning, many of you know and you believe. And if you didn't, you'd probably find a different church that wasn't so tedious in preaching through the Bible, verse by verse. I mean, some of you are committed. You're already on the 15-year commitment plan, because you're like, man, they started Psalms. I got to be here every summer for the next 15 years to get through that, verse by verse. And you're here because you understand, like both Scott and myself, our burden is we want to understand what did the author intend for us to understand.

And we believe that this is from God. So we're going to take the time to prepare, to study, and then to communicate. Now, you're maybe thinking, well, Jay, I'm in. I believe that.

What do I say to the skeptic, though, who says, I don't know. I don't know about the Bible. I don't know if the Bible can be trusted. I think it's just another religious text out there. It's just an ordinary book. And I would suggest, instead of necessarily getting into a technical debate, and I think there's a place for this, but when I'm conversing with individuals in my car, my response is like, well, why should I read the Bible? Why do you read the Bible?

My response is, I think it actually does the best job of explaining things as they actually are. I think that's a great response. Why do you read the Bible? I think it does the best job of explaining things as they actually are. It does the best job of explaining reality. Friends, the Christian worldview, it fits like a glove on the hand of reality. It's not a book that escapes reality. Rather, it explains it. And it does it so well. Oh, that's why life is precious. Because God's Word says that man's created in his image. Male and female, he created them. Oh, that's why even if you're sick, you're valuable, you're precious, handicapped, elderly, pre-born, all made in the image of God.

[36:06] God's Word explains that. It explains why there's this dichotomy of nobility and evil in mankind. Well, God created man in his image, and yet man chose to throw off God's authority, thereby sin entering the world. And now man is what? He's both beautiful, created in the image of God, but he's also broken. He's broken.

It tells us why we love to create. Because God is a creator God, and we're made in his image. Why do we long for and crave for community? We were created by a relational God. He's existed in perfect community in the triune Godhead for all eternity. It gives us a foundation for morality. We observe this growing out of the character of God described in this book. Why do you read the Bible? It does the best job of explaining things as they actually appear to be. I think Lewis said it this way, I believe in Christianity, and I think you could equally, you could, God's Word, you could place that in there instead, as I believe that the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because by it

I see everything else. Amen? God's Word is a lens to understand life.

Jay, how can we know? Isn't the Bible polluted? It's changed over the years. It's like the telephone game. I had this conversation Friday night as I'm having an interaction with a young man, driving him to his outing, had a full bag of clanking bottles. No doubt where he was going and what he was planning to do. But he wanted to talk about how God's Word was flawed. And he's like, oh man, it's a telephone game. I said, it's actually not. And I explained to him that the transmission of God's Word, it's not this linear process as though one copy was made and then from that the next and then the next and then the next. You know, one mistake would then enter and then permanently corrupt everything downstream. I said, actually, like, Bible transmission, it's not linear, it's geometric. Well, what does that mean, Jay? It means that in the original autograph, let's say you had 10 copies made. Well, from those 10, let's say you have another 10 each, so you have 100 copies. And then from them, and it's like a family tree, right? And it just kind of works its way out. It's geometric. So you have this wonderful opportunity to then evaluate all these different manuscripts. And guys, this Bible that I have in my hand, it's so good, the ESV. I actually have a Bible from the 16th century, a page on my wall in my office, the Geneva Bible. And this is actually a superior translation. Did you know that? It uses more manuscript evidence than they did even back in the 16th century. And I could get into a kind of a little bit of a geeky sort of explanation of textual criticism and how the Geneva Bible used the Texas Receptus and then the King James used it. [39:35] And there are some words even, like King James, Revelation 22, verse 19, where it talks about the book of life, not the tree of life. It's actually the tree of life. Now, it doesn't change doctrine, but the point is we have so much manuscript evidence, like we can tell if an error enters in, we can tell. It's sort of like a recipe. Like if you have like the, you know, the recipe for like the most amazing banana bread and like it's like copied out there and all of a sudden like somebody's adding walnuts and you're like, what? When did that happen? Well, you go back and you examine all of the different copies of that and you determine, oh, it was in this neighborhood over here and then all these people in that neighborhood, let's just say the West Plains out there, they're all adding walnuts to their banana bread, but we know in all these others it's not there because we have earlier copies. And so there's a whole like science to this, friends. And I just want you to know like, man, what we have in our hand, we can be assured this is God's Word. F.F. Bruce said this, the variant readings about which any doubt remains do not affect any material question of historic fact or of Christian faith and practice. And I think it's a crack up that the leading atheist of our day, Bart Ehrman, who's also a New Testament scholar, and he knows he's denied the faith, but he says actually most of these differences are completely immaterial and insignificant. Friends, in terms of historical reliability, the Bible has no equal. That's what I told my passenger as I explained the difference between linear and geometric transmission. And by the end of it, he's like, oh, okay, maybe you're right. Because he's just heard something, right? Oh, it's a telephone game. I said, no, no, no, no.

And I said this to him, I said, what I don't want you to do is to dismiss God's Word, is to dismiss the Bible by just throwing out, it's changed. Man, the evidence that we have, the Bible is unparalleled related to any other ancient writings. Homer's Iliad, the latest count, 1,800 ancient Greek copies. That's a lot. Nobody ever questions, do we really know what Homer was writing? No. 1,800, like, ancient Greek manuscripts there? Well, the New Testament, 5,800 or so, near 6,000 ancient Greek manuscripts from the 2nd to the 16th century. That's a three-to-one ratio. And yet we want to attack God's Word and we want to put it through a testing that is like, we don't test any other document the same way. And I think that's the enemy because he wants people to dismiss it as though we don't really know what's in the heart and mind of God. And I tell you what, if you add in other languages in terms of all these manuscripts that we have, the Syriac, Coptic, Latin, you have 20,000 to 25,000 ancient manuscripts, friend. The oldest fragment of New Testament was found in Egypt, the John Ryland Library, Papyrus. It's in the John Ryland Library in Manchester, England. But it's a portion of John chapter 18. Well, that's considered the oldest, like, fragment we have, copy of Scripture. We don't have the original autographs, but they date that to around 120 A.D., which is incredible because that's perhaps 30 years within where John actually would have written it. And consider this, well, what if we didn't have all of these copies, Jay? What if we didn't have all this manuscript evidence? Well, if you just look at all the Bible quotes contained in the church father's writing from, like, 100 to 450 A.D., aside from about 15 to 20 verses, you would have enough

Scripture, actually, to construct an entire New Testament. The Bible is unparalleled as an ancient piece of literature. It's unparalleled. At the very least, it's a reliable historical document.

And I had the conversation with a gentleman from Iran a few months back who was telling me, man, you should really, you should read the Koran. It tells you who Jesus is. And I'm like, why would I read a document 600 years removed when I can read one that's from the first century? I'm going to go with the Bible. I think that's a reasonable, logical argument to make. Now, additionally, the Bible, this book that we have, it shouldn't read as well as it does. It really shouldn't. The flow of Scripture, it's marvelous. But think about it. It was like 40 authors, and it flows 1,500 years over a period it was written. Primarily two languages, but three with Aramaic in there. Three different continents, and it is internally consistent related to the flow of the story. It actually makes sense.

[45:09] It's highly readable. It's one true story from beginning to end. And you have these major themes that are woven. Creation, man's fall, God's redemption, and then finally the celebration, consummation at the end. And the star of the show, Jesus said it, it's me. The whole Old Testament points to me. The Bible flows so well. Like, 15, how? God's hands in this, friends. It should, it's, there should be a little trepidation. Like, this really is from God? He revealed Himself in the pages of a book? Yeah. Yeah, He really did. And it flows so, guys, I can't keep my flow of thought for more than maybe five minutes. And if I'm doing that to some misbehaving children, it lasts about 30 seconds.

And then I'm going to be over here, and then over here. And it's not going to make a lot of sense. It's going to be a lot of passion, but the Bible is unparalleled. One of my favorite aspects of the Bible, all the prophecies, 300 pointing to Jesus. Again, He's the star of the show. Let me just give you one. I think you're familiar, but just to nourish our souls this morning, Isaiah writes in 53 verse 12, therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors. Yet he bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors. The Old Testament is about who? Jesus. This is who we're talking about here. He'll be numbered with the transgressors. And then in Matthew 27, 38, then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. He's numbered with the transgressors. Prophecy fulfilled.

Isaiah wrote this 700 years before the crucifixion. That's incredible, friends. And prior to 1947, our oldest Isaiah manuscript with a 10th century AD document, the archaeological discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has given us a complete copy of Isaiah dated to, and the scholars kind of, but it's around 125 BC, 150 years prior to the crucifixion. And I just think knowing that, like go ahead and read Isaiah 53 with that knowledge. Friends, we could be a church. I mean, there's so many reasons we believe the Bible is indeed the very Word of God. But we could be a church that's just like, yeah, we're about the Bible, Bible, Bible. No, let's not just defend the Bible. Let's read it. Let's obey it. Let's share it.

I had the best question, and I'll end with this. Last night, I drove a gentleman, and as we're talking, he's a philosophy major at a school, and I said, oh, philosophy of religion. I said, oh, what are you learning? I asked him, I said, what are you learning? I'm a pastor, so I'm curious. And then got done sharing that, and they said, hey, you can ask me anything. We had some time. He's like, oh, man, I can ask you anything. I'm like, yep, nothing's off the limit. I'm not offended. You ask me whatever. I'm the uber pastor. He's like, uber pastor? I didn't know those were real. Oh, yeah. There's a few of us. So he asked me a great question. He said, Pastor Jay, how does God speak to you? That was the question. I said, well, you know what? God speaks in a lot of different ways.

[49:02] And I shared some of those. He'll speak through pain. Job says that, right? Through conscience, conviction of sin. That's a personal one, Holy Spirit. That's communication from God.

But I said, he speaks through creation, right? The heavens declare. I said, you know what? That tells us that God exists. But I said, if you want to know his name, do you want to know his name? He's like, kind of. I said, well, you got to read the book. God's special revelation.

Creation tells us he exists. The Bible tells us his name. Friends, we are so blessed. We counted a privilege to gather every week and to study this book. And I want to encourage you, if you have not been in it this week, spend some time. Enjoy it. And let God speak to you. Amen? Father, thank you for this morning, for time together. Lord, it's remarkable that you would include us in your plans and you always get what you want. The Word is exactly what you wanted. And Lord, you also include us in all sorts of ministry and you do your work through people in a marvelous way. Thank you that you would call us to be ambassadors, ministers to one another. Lord, I pray that ministry would even

happen this morning. Somebody needs to be reminded of the truth of the gospel, the power of your Word, the power of your Spirit. We could speak that to a brother or sister. If somebody's here and they don't know you, Jesus, that they would bow their knee to you. And they would say, Jesus, I am a sinner and I need the most magnificent Savior. And that's you, Jesus. And they would trust in your free gift to salvation. Thank you that you're delighted to rescue sinners. And Lord, thank you that the vast collection of people, maybe all, I don't know where they're at, but we're trophies of grace. And that's a humbling thing. It's nothing we did. And we say thank you. We love you. Thank you for your Word. Pray that we would spend time with you this weekend. In Jesus' name, amen.