

If Jesus Wasn't God

by John Ankerberg

John Ankerberg's sermon emphasizes the historical reality of Jesus Christ and the importance of understanding His divinity for faith in Christianity.

Duration: 52:45

Scripture: Luke 1:1, Acts 4:19

Topics: "Atheism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the difficulty of deriving historical facts from the legends and descriptions of miracles performed by Jesus. He uses an analogy of a whispering game at a party to explain how the Gospels may have been passed down and potentially distorted over time. The speaker then presents a hypothetical scenario where Jesus appears on stage and performs supernatural acts, emphasizing the impact and significance of witnessing such events. The sermon concludes with the suggestion that if Jesus was not truly God, then he would have deserved an Oscar for his convincing performance.

Transcript

The following Stealing the Mind Bible Conference presentation is by John Ankerberg and is entitled, If Jesus Wasn't God, He Deserved an Oscar. For a free catalog of all of our tapes and books, call Compass at 1-800-977-2177 or on the web at www.compass.org. Today I want to just talk to you. I'm not going to use the PowerPoint.

I'm not going to talk a long time. But I do want to talk to you just kind of face-to-face. Our Lord is under attack.

Christianity is under attack. And I want to help you in knowing what to say to people that come against Jesus, who are actually seeking for Jesus. Maybe you're here today and you've heard all these great speakers talking about knowing God, coming to God through Jesus Christ, and you do not have that relationship.

At the close of this session, I'm going to ask you to say a prayer with me and invite Christ into your life, because you can walk out of this room knowing that Christ is your Savior, that your sins are forgiven, and you're on your way to heaven. You can know that beyond a shadow of a doubt. But some of you don't know that.

But it all centers around who Jesus is. Now, usually when we talk about Jesus on campus, there's two folks, two people that we usually come across. One of them is the person that will say to me, John, I don't want to talk about Jesus because I'm an atheist.

What is an atheist? An atheist is a person who says it's a fact that God does not exist. What do you say to that kind of a person? I usually say to that kid, prove it. And you start thinking, what would this kid need to prove the fact that God does not exist? What he would need is all knowledge.

And nobody has all knowledge. For example, what if God was a real person in the back of this hall? You don't know what people in the back of this hall are saying or doing. You don't know if somebody, by the name of God, was in Chicago while we're here or in Hong Kong or in some part of the world where you're not.

You'd have to have all knowledge to make sure God did not exist and was not there. And oh, by the way, it's not just the Earth. Take our galaxy.

If spacemen got into a rocket and could approach the speed of light at 186,000 miles per second, if they were going in space, time would slow down for them. But even so, in a lifetime, they would not get out of our galaxy because it is so long. And then scientists tell us there are billions and billions and billions of other galaxies out in that which is called the universe.

And what if God was out there? Nobody has enough information, nobody has enough knowledge to say there is no God. Usually it's the village atheist that says that because they don't know what they're talking about. The best you can be would be an agnostic.

What is an agnostic? Well, it means that you're brilliant in the area of not knowing anything. Thomas Huxley coined the term, it means you don't know. Now, there are two kinds of agnostics that I've found in society.

One is the person that says, I'm an ordinary agnostic. That is that I don't know if God exists, but if you've got some evidence, I'm open to it. I love that kind of a person.

If you're an agnostic, if you don't know about God, I hope that you're at least open to listening to the evidence today. But then there's the second kind of agnostic, that's the ornery agnostic. The ornery agnostic says, I don't know if there is a God, but I know that if you say that you know there is a God, I know that you're not right.

And I say, how do you know? And he says, I know. The ornery agnostic. Again, if you're an agnostic and you don't know, I hope that you're at least open to the evidence.

Well, what is the evidence? What is Christianity? Christianity, some people think, is a system of ethics, of right and wrong. It's not a system of ethics of right and wrong. It includes those.

We certainly believe in absolute right and wrong, but that's not basic Christianity. Some people think it's a philosophy of life. And it certainly encompasses a philosophy of life, but it's not that primarily.

Christianity is based totally on a person who lived in real history by the name of Jesus Christ. And your relationship with Jesus. Christianity is based on a real person who actually lived in real history and your relationship with him.

Let me start out by giving you the conclusion of who I think Jesus is in contemporary terms. And then I want to give you the evidence of how I would approach this with a non-Christian. Let's say that Jesus Christ was backstage, and I was to say, ladies and gentlemen, in a moment I'd like to introduce Jesus Christ, and he's going to come out here.

He's going to talk to you. I want you to know he's kind of a scary person. And so when he comes out, just give him a hand.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, give a great big hand of applause to Jesus Christ. And Jesus walks up, stands behind the pulpit. You clap.

He looks at all of you. He snaps his fingers. The stadium disappears.

Snaps his fingers again. The earth disappears. He snaps his fingers one more time.

The sun goes black. The stars quit shining. And you and Jesus Christ stand in utter space together.

He smiles. He says, don't worry. He snaps his fingers again.

And it all comes back together again. That's who I think Jesus Christ is. And as soon as I say that on campus, a lot of kids will say, well, that's not the Jesus that I know.

And that's the problem. It's like the old TV program, Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? Because we've got a lot of Jesuses running around today. Jesus Christ, if he really lived on this planet 1,900 years ago, and the evidence shows that he did, is who he is.

The question is, what does the evidence show about him? Now, I said that Christianity is based on a real person who lived in real history. That's important. This is different than other religious leaders, because you can go back, before you invest your faith in Jesus Christ, you can actually check out the evidence for him.

And I want to show you what difference this makes. I want to ask you a question, and this will get us into this whole thing of what difference it makes about history. How many of you here believe that Abraham Lincoln was the President of the United States at one time? Would you put your hand up? Well, great.

Now, how many of you have met Lincoln personally? Would you put your hand up? Nobody. Well, then how did you know that he was the President of the United States? One time I was at the University of Chicago, and I was speaking, and three guys in the back put their hand up. They had met Lincoln personally.

Got a little worried about them until I saw they were sitting on the floor, and they had their collar pulled up. They were smoking a little weed back there. They had met Lincoln personally.

We haven't met Lincoln personally, but we all believe he was the President of the United States. How do you know that? One day you were awake in history class, right? And you can remember the teacher, the professor, talking about certain people that had heard Lincoln talk, both pro and con. They had written down what he said, and this had come down to us as historical evidence that showed us that Lincoln was the President of the United States.

And going on back in history, there are other people just like that. You remember Napoleon? Do you believe that Napoleon actually lived? Of course you do. Have you met him? No.

How do you know? Because we have historical evidence about Napoleon. And going on back before Napoleon, there was Charlemagne. Remember good old Charlemagne? And before Charlemagne, there was a person by the name of Julius Caesar.

And right about the time of Julius Caesar, there was another person by the name of Jesus Christ that actually lived. How do we know that? On the same basis that we know that Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon, and Abraham Lincoln lived, there are historical eyewitness accounts about his life. If you go to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the 15th edition, you'll find there's 20,000 words listed to the person of Jesus Christ.

Not even a hint that he didn't exist. Why? Because the guys at the University of Chicago love Jesus so much? Are you kidding? Everybody that's ever done an historical account of the first hundred years A.D., whether they've been Buddhist, Hindu, skeptic, or Christian, has put Jesus Christ in there. Why? Because there is historical information that's reliable that tells us he actually lived.

In fact, there are seven people that wrote about Jesus Christ. Who were they? A little louder. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, not Acts, Paul, James, and Peter.

Alright? But you say, well, wait a minute, those guys were the disciples. They were padding the case, weren't they? Well, they could have. But the first thing is, is that they claimed that they were either eyewitnesses or that they had contact with other eyewitnesses, and they wrote their account on what they saw.

Now, how does our secular world look at these gospel writers? Well, every six weeks, six months, I would say, you'll see a magazine that comes out, something like this. This is U.S. News World Report. You'll get Time, you'll get some of the other magazines.

And on the cover, you can see it's a picture of Jesus. And what you can't see is, over on the right-hand side, there's a question that's the title of the article, and it says, Who was Jesus? Alright? That's the question. Who was Jesus? Peter Jennings, about two years ago, on ABC, devoted two hours to try and answering that question.

Who was Jesus? You listen to Peter Jennings' two-hour program, you listen, or if you read the article in U.S. News and World Report, you'll find out they don't know. Now, we have done a special. It's at our book table at the back.

It's called A Response to ABC and Peter Jennings and the Search for Jesus, where we got 21 of the world's top scholars to respond to the stuff they put in that special. But the thing is, how do our skeptics today, how do our critics, how do they look at Jesus? Another way of saying this, it'll bring it a little closer home, is mom and dad, if you raise your kid at church, from zero all the way up through high school, and every Sunday you bring them to church, you read the Bible to them, you pray, and then you send them away to college, when they get to college, what will 99.9% of the professors at the universities teach them about Jesus? Many folks will tell me I sent my kids away to school and I lost them both to the same ungodly professor. Well, why? Let me give you a quote.

This comes from a debate that took place in the northeastern part of the country, and one of my friends was actually in this debate, but the professor that was the non-Christian, representing the classics, and looking at Jesus' life and looking at the evidence, he made this statement, it was picked up by the papers, and it was touted all across the northeastern part of the country. This was Professor Avram Stroll, University of British Columbia. Avram Stroll said, Jesus probably did exist.

Now remember, this is what most of your kids are going to get at school. Jesus probably did exist. But so many legends have grown up about him that it's impossible for scholars to find out anything about the real man.

The Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John were written long after Jesus was crucified and provide no reliable historical information about him. It's almost impossible today to derive historical facts from the legends and descriptions of miracles performed by Jesus. That is the standard fare that your kids will receive at the university, and the way that the professor will explain it is, this is how the Gospels came around.

It's like going to a party where you whisper into the ear of a person at the party a sentence, and you ask them to whisper it into the ear of somebody else, and the rest of the room, of course, does not know what that sentence is. And as it is whispered around the room, when it finally comes to the end, you ask the guy at the end to stand up and tell everybody what that sentence is. And what happens to that sentence? It's completely distorted.

So here's what the scholars are saying today. Here's how the Gospels came down to us, the information about Jesus. Jesus did his thing over here.

This is where he taught. This is where he lived his life, whatever he did, and people saw that, and they passed it on orally. It is word of mouth, person to person.

It came down many, many years, like going through this audience, and at the end of that time, what was heard by the last persons, that was what was written down, and that's why it's legend, it's myth, and it has no relationship to what happened over here at the front. It's the sincere faith of the Church. It's what people really believed, but we can't trust it.

It's not reliable. Well, if that's how it happened, we're in big trouble, I agree. But the question is this, if you take the person at the party, and you whisper a sentence into their ear, and then you say, now, please, that person, stand up, and tell the rest of us, you got about a 100% chance of getting it right every time.

The question is, do we have people that were eyewitnesses that actually saw the events, that wrote it down, or is this the accumulated legend of people 200 years after Jesus, and then it was written down? Well, in order to determine that, we ought to look at what the writers said, right? I mean, anybody can hypothesize about anything, but first of all, when you look at documents, you ought to at least see what they have to say. And now, if you're a non-Christian, I want you to know that I'm not taking the Bible as a book that dropped out of heaven, that's inspired in an errand. I believe that, but I don't have to start there.

And I would suggest to you that when you look at the road map, or you look at your phone book, and you get information from the road map or your phone book, you're looking for reliable information, and you're not expecting that it's inerrant or inspired of God. All you want to know is, can I get a phone number, can I find out where I'm going? And in looking at historical figures of the past, all we want to find out is, do these

people present credible information so we can tell that what they're saying about Jesus is true? So, what we want to find out is we want to start down this path. First of all, I want to find out, did the authors claim to be eyewitnesses? Did they claim to be on the scene? Did they have contact with the eyewitnesses? Or is this something that came down to them and was written down many years before? Now, how many of you have Bibles with you? Would you put them up? Let me see.

All right, great. Turn to Luke chapter 1, and I want to show you some verses that a lot of people have missed. Luke chapter 1, verse 1. If you haven't got a Bible, look at somebody else's there.

Or jot these down. In other words, just remember what we're talking about here. Luke says this, Many, that is many people, have undertaken to draw up an account that's a written historical narrative of the things that have been fulfilled among us.

What are the things fulfilled among us? You're going to find out that they're the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. But he says many people, before he ever got on the scene, had undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were what? Eyewitnesses. Now, he's talking about the apostles here.

These people were right on the scene. They were the ones that Jesus picked out. They saw what he did, and they gave eyewitness accounts to others.

Luke said, just like they gave eyewitness accounts, there were other people that weren't apostles that saw Jesus in different villages, and they were so impressed that they also wrote bits and pieces, eyewitness accounts, and he had those in his possession. Just like the apostles gave stuff, there were other reports, other historical narratives, that were written about Jesus that he had in his possession. Now look what he says, Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning.

The word carefully investigated are some Greek words that mean, just like when a kid goes and does his term paper, he gets all of his sources out, he looks at all of them, and then on the basis of what he has read, he writes his report. Now Luke says, I carefully examined everything. In other words, he just didn't accept it simply because the guy said he was an eyewitness.

He said, I carefully investigated. Now, how could he do that? Well, we know that Luke was the traveling companion of who? The Apostle Paul. When the Apostle Paul would go around the Empire preaching, many times he would meet with other apostles of Jesus.

And when he was with those apostles, Luke could pull out these accounts and he could talk to them. He could say to Peter, now look, this guy says, when Jesus was here at the Jordan, or Jesus was in Jerusalem, or Jesus was over here, that Jesus said and he did these things. Now I have no reason to doubt this, but the fact is, what do you think, because you were there, I know you were there, is this what happened? And he would carefully investigate everything.

He said that's on that basis that he wrote the book of Luke. Now it's very interesting that when he says, I investigated everything from the beginning, which is the only gospel that we have that really goes back and deals with the birth narrative of Jesus. It's Luke.

Because Luke says, I went back and carefully investigated everything from the very beginning. But Luke says, this is the basis upon which I did it. Now why did he do it? He said, therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account

for you, most excellent Theophilus, probably a governor or a person that was a benefactor of Luke, so that you may know, now look at it, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

He wrote this report so that Theophilus would know the certainty of the things he had heard. I go over to 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 16. 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 16.

Here's another writer. Do you remember when the film came out, The Last Temptation of Christ? Martin Scorsese took Nikos Konstantzakis' book, The Last Temptation of Christ, made a blasphemous movie about this thing, about Jesus. A lot of Christians demonstrated against it.

But Universal went ahead and played it anyway. But in that story, Scorsese took the liberal mindset of our day and pictured it in his movie. And what he was talking about was that this faith of the church that came down hundreds of years after Jesus was really made up by the Christians along the way.

And the way he showed that was in the movie, he had the disciples sitting around the campfire. Jesus had already passed off the scene. And Peter turns to James and he says, Hey, we've got to talk to the people tomorrow.

We've got to tell them about Jesus. What should we tell them about Jesus? And James thinks about it and says, Well, I'll tell you what. They're kind of hungry.

Why don't we tell them that Jesus actually at one time fed 5,000 people with some bread and fishes. And Peter says, Oh, yeah, that'll be good. That'll sell.

That'll be really good. And so they cooked it up at the campfire. The next day they went out and Scorsese showed the disciples who had created this myth telling the people.

That's what the liberals are saying to our kids about Jesus. But Scorsese, Nikos Katsantzakis, and a lot of our professors have never seen what Peter himself said about such things. Now take a look.

This is just one verse. 2 Peter 1, verse 16. Peter says, We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But we were what? We were eyewitnesses. Hey, man, we were there. Let's get a third one.

Go over to 1 John. Not the Gospel of John. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

But back by Revelation. Go by 1, 2, 3 John. 1 John, back there, chapter 1. Look at what this man said.

1 John, chapter 1. This apostle simply says this. That which was from the beginning. And now, if you were to underline this, you can do this at home.

Five times he's going to mention we have seen something. Three times we have heard something. And six times we proclaim to you or we testify to you what we saw.

Okay? So listen to what he says. That which was from the beginning which we have heard. Which we have seen with our eyes.

Which we have looked at and our hands have touched. Now why did John say that they touched him? Because there was this little cult going around called Gnosticism. And Gnosticism said that Jesus was a ghost.

Ghost you can't touch. John said Jesus is not a ghost. Why? We touched him.

We were there. We saw him with our own eyes and we touched him. Our hands have touched.

This is what we proclaim concerning the Word of Life. The life appeared. We have seen it.

We testify to it. We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard.

So that you may also have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. He, that's Jesus, commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.

Now I'm going to come back to that little phrase. God appointed Jesus to be the judge of the living and the dead. But before you go anywhere else, okay, in just looking at this writer, do you think that he claims that he saw something? That he was there? He heard him? And that's what they're testifying about? If that's not what he's saying, then I don't know how you can convey it in any kind of language.

Now they may be lying through their teeth and we can check them. But the first thing I want you to see is what did they claim? And they claim to be eyewitnesses and right on the scene. But that's not all.

Go over to Acts chapter 1. Acts chapter 1. Acts is the second book that Luke wrote. The first one was the Gospel of Luke. This is the second one.

He refers back to the first one. He starts out, in my former book, Theophilus, the Gospel of Luke, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach. What was the Gospel of Luke about? All that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving instruction through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. And he appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God. So Luke says, they were picked out by Jesus.

Now drop down to Acts chapter 1 verse 8. This is a verse we all know. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. But look at what it says.

And Jesus said, You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth. The question is, did they do that? You talk to Tom Wright at Westminster Abbey right now. If you saw the Queen Mother's funeral, Tom was the third one in line there because he's chaplain to the Queen.

Tom Wright is probably the number one Jesus scholar on the Protestant side in the world. And he said, You know, you think about these guys. Over 40 days, they were given many infallible proofs that Jesus was alive.

Why would they need it? Well, listen, if you went to somebody's funeral and then a week later you were in the coffee shop and you saw that person, would you start to doubt your own thinking? You'd want to go over to Walmart and with your friends all of a sudden see that person coming and say, Do you see what I see? And that would be an evidence. And then the fact is when you had those two might not even believe it, you'd say, Well, we need to get about 12 others. And 12 of you are standing there and the person comes on over and shakes hands with all of you.

You say, Did you see what I just saw? Didn't we bury this guy last week? And then you're over at church and on Sunday night there's about 500 people over at the church and this guy walks out from behind the curtains and he's up on stage. You would want that kind of proof. Many infallible proofs that Jesus was alive.

In over 40 days, Jesus appeared over and over and over again to these same guys and to many other people and gave them many demonstrations that he was who he claimed to be. Well, it says, Now go out there. After he says, I've given you this proof, go out and tell them what you saw.

Did they do it? Tom Wright says, By 100 A.D., the Roman Emperor's getting letters from different people like Pilate in different cities across the Roman Empire saying, What are we supposed to do with all these Christians? The Christians were growing like mad. Why? Because they said, Jesus was alive. He arose from the dead.

He had paid for their sins. He was living in their life. They'd experienced his power and nothing could stop them.

And they changed the world. But notice, in the account, the historical account of Acts, listen to what these guys said. Go down to Acts 2, verse 22.

Here you've got Peter preaching. Men of Israel, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs.

Interesting, Peter was presenting information to other eyewitnesses who had not believed in Jesus. He was saying, Hey, what I'm telling you about you already know you were there. Go down to Acts 2, verse 32.

Peter says, God raised this Jesus to life. We are all witnesses of the fact. Acts 3. Just turn the page.

Acts 3, verse 14 and 15. You disown the holy and righteous one and ask that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.

We are witnesses of this. Turn the page again. Acts chapter 4, 19 and 20.

I love this. You just heard a moment ago what John the Apostle said. Here it says, But Peter and John replied.

See if this sounds like John. But Peter and John replied, Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

Does that sound like John? They saw something. Give you just a couple more. Acts chapter 10.

Acts chapter 10. And these aren't the only ones that you can find. The New Testament is loaded, but I just want you to get the flavor.

Again, they may be lying through their teeth, but I just want you to see what they claimed. Acts chapter 10, verse 38. Peter describes and says, God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on the tree, but God raised him. One of the creedal statements, the belief statements of the early Christians was very short, and it was simply this.

You killed him. God raised him. It's got a real hang to it, doesn't it? You killed him, but God raised him.

You find that in different places in the New Testament, and the scholars think that goes right back to Jesus' resurrection, and here it is right here. We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.

He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen. That is by us, who ate and drank with him after he arose from the dead. One more, just mark it down.

Galatians 1, verse 20. Paul wrote, I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. Now, that's what they claimed.

They claimed to be eyewitnesses or that they had contact with the eyewitnesses. How do we know they told the truth? How do you know that what you have in your New Testament is accurate information about Jesus? Because it came out early while people that loved Jesus and hated Jesus were still alive. F.F. Bruce at Manchester wrote a book called *The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?* And he said, you know, it would have been a real strong corrective if you had people in the audience that did not believe in Jesus but had witnessed the life events that he had done.

They were there when you were preaching. They would have been only too happy to correct what you were saying. If books came out while they were still living because they disliked Jesus or even hated Jesus, they would be only too quick to go to those books and to say, this never happened and I was there.

Well, when did these books come out? There's a fellow by the name of William F. Albright at Johns Hopkins University. Before he died, he was considered to be the foremost biblical archaeologist in the world. I don't think that Albright was a Christian.

But he was considered to be an expert, knew the languages backwards and forwards. William F. Albright looked at the New Testament documents and he made this statement. He said, in my opinion, every one of the books of the New Testament, that is from Matthew to Revelation, every one of those books, was written by a baptized Jew sometime between 45 to 75 A.D. 45 to 75 A.D. Do you remember the Death of God movement? When the Death of God movement swept across the United States, it was started by some liberal theologians that didn't even believe in God in England and America.

One of them was John A.T. Robinson. He wrote a book, *Honest to God*, so I used to call him *Honest to God*, John A.T. Robinson. And Robinson was asked by his friends to write a book about the New Testament and to say when these books were written.

And he wrote a book redating the New Testament. And he said that in his opinion, some of the books of the New Testament were written as early as 40 A.D. and all of them were in circulation by 70 A.D. You say, what difference does that make? When did Jesus die? 30 A.D. So if Albright and John A.T. Robinson are in the ballgame here, that means if Jesus died at 30 and some of these books were on the newsstands in Jerusalem at 40, that means within 10 years of Jesus passing off the scene, these books were in circulation. And as F.F. Bruce at Manchester said, they came out when people that were hostile to

Jesus were living, as well as those who loved Jesus were living and could remember back to the events.

And both sides would have been interested in correcting those accounts if they were wrong and they didn't. And he says, that's why it tells us we have accurate information. Now let me show you how this works in an illustration you can understand right today.

Where were you? What were you feeling? Who told you? The President of the United States has been shot and we're referring back to John F. Kennedy. How many of you can remember where you were, how you felt, and who told you? Put your hand up. Yeah.

Yeah. It just takes a moment to say, can you remember watching the limousine roll down the streets in Dallas? Do you remember the President's head being shattered? Do you remember Jackie Kennedy coming off the airplane in her pink dress, splattered with the blood of the President? Do you remember Lyndon Johnson putting up his hand in the airplane with that haggard face of his and everybody being so solemn and stern? Do you remember watching the casket being drawn down Pennsylvania Avenue and people stood silently on both sides? Do you remember back when John John stood at the casket and as it went by, he saluted and wiped out everybody? Do you remember that? Yeah. You can remember all of that.

You can pull back that very emotion that you have. But oh, by the way, how long ago did that happen? 39 years ago. So the guys that didn't raise their hand, the reason they didn't raise their hand, they weren't born yet.

See, if somebody came out now and said, this is the way that Kennedy died. See, there was an Indian standing on the sidewalk in Dallas. And as the limousine came by, the Indian took this bow, got the arrow, and pulled it back and shot Kennedy right in the back and the arrow was sticking out and that's how he died.

You would say, uh-uh, why? Because you were an eyewitness. You saw it. Maybe you saw it via television.

I was speaking in Dallas one time when I was humming through this thing and all of a sudden the room went quiet and I thought, oh man, what did I say? Then I realized, I'm in Dallas. Further, I was four blocks from where it happened. And the people that were listening to me, I realized some of these people were actually eyewitnesses that were on the street and they saw it.

Nobody could get by with changing the history about Kennedy because the eyewitnesses are still alive. And nobody could get rid of the information about Jesus or change it because the eyewitnesses, both pro and con, if you loved Jesus because you loved him, you would not let anybody mess with that information. If you hated Jesus, you would be sure to make sure that it was pointed out that it was wrong.

And neither side did it. We have accurate information. Archaeology today can check these writers.

In the Gospel of Luke alone, in an ax, they know that Luke mentioned 32 different countries. He described 54 different cities. He mentioned nine islands, several rulers, and they found out via archaeology that Luke never made one mistake.

He was accurate in every one of those things they could check him on. If a guy is accurate on everything that you can check him on, then in the stuff that you can't check him on, you ought to give him the benefit

of the doubt. We have eyewitness information.

We have it early. We have archaeological confirmation and a whole lot more. That ought to give you a basis of saying, well, who was Jesus? And the next year, if you come on back, I'll do part two of this, okay? But let me give you one point.

People say, do you need to know Greek and Hebrew to know who Jesus was? Uh-uh. Just take a stab at this. Jesus one day came up, and he said, folks, I'm coming back at the end of the world.

I'm going to gather all the nations before me, and I'm going to determine the eternal destiny of every man, woman, and child that's ever lived. Just take a wild guess. Who do you think that Jesus was claiming to be? Larry Burkett just mentioned this verse.

He said, in that day, many people are going to say to me, Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we do miracles in your name? They probably will have. But it's interesting that what Jesus said is, I'm sorry. I never knew you depart from me.

Now, here's what I want to get. Those of you who say you know Jesus Christ, it's not do you know Jesus Christ, but does Jesus Christ know you? If I say to you, do you know Bill Clinton? Do you know George Bush? Do you know senior George Bush? Do you know Ronald Reagan? Do you know Jimmy Carter? Do you know Gerald Ford? You say, oh, sure, I've heard a lot about those guys. I've seen them on the news, da-da-da-da-da, and I've even been in the receiving line where I shook their hand at one time or another when they were running for office.

But then if you go to the president and you say, Mr. President, this person over here says they know you, and the president looks out and says, I'm sorry. I don't know that person. Some of you know information about Jesus.

You've said prayers to Jesus. You have learned from Sunday school teachers about Jesus. You believe He's God, but you don't have a relationship with Jesus.

How can you have a relationship with Jesus so that when you stand before Him someday, when He's at the judgment and all the world stands before Him and it's your turn to come up, and you won't stand there with your wife or with your husband or with your kids or with your neighbors, it'll be you alone, and when He looks at you, the question is, will He know you? How can Jesus get to know you? Jesus said, realize you're a sinner. Admit to Him you're a sinner. How good do you have to be to get into heaven? Jesus said, be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Are you perfect? I'm talking 100% right across the board. You never did one thing wrong your entire life. Perfect.

If not, don't ever think you're going to hit heaven. How are you doing so far? Jesus says, admit that you're a sinner. You need a Savior, or you're never going to stand before God and be accepted.

Admit to Him that you are a sinner, that you need Him, and then realize He is the Savior. He came, He said, to give His life as a ransom for many. I had a friend that was a banker in Minneapolis, and his wife was actually kidnapped.

And the kidnapers demanded that they get \$250,000 from this fellow. FBI said, don't pay it because they'll kill her anyway. He gave the ransom.

He paid the money, and he got her back. Jesus said, I came to give my life as a ransom for you. He, when He's on that cross, all of our sin was picked up and laid to Him legally, and God punished Him in our place.

He was our substitute. So that God can remain a righteous judge, no sin goes unpunished. You either pay for it yourself, or Jesus will pay for it.

Jesus has paid for it. But if you've never come to Him, He has never appropriated that forgiveness. He has never made you a Christian.

How do you come to Him? You come to Him with faith. You believe who He is, and you transfer your faith from yourself and anything that you will do to Him. You risk everything on Him and what He says and what His promises are.

Have you ever come to Jesus Christ in simple faith and said, I admit to you that I'm a sinner. I'm sunk. I'll never get to heaven.

But I know that you love me. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever, that means you, whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but they'll have everlasting life. I want that, Jesus.

I am a sinner. And I'm willing to transfer my trust from myself and invest it all in you. Bet the house on it.

Bet my eternal destiny on you. Jesus said, I can handle it. And how do you do that? You simply call to Him.

Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Would you bow your head and close your eyes for a moment? Then we're going to be dismissed. Right now, I'm going to say a short prayer.

I'm going to say it out loud. But I'm going to ask you, if you wish to start a relationship with Jesus Christ personally, to, in your heart, in your mind, right where you sit, to say this prayer, in your heart, in your mind. You don't have to say it out loud.

Ask Jesus to be your Savior, to make you a Christian today. He says He will. He'll change your life.

He'll give you power that you do not have to live for Him the way He wants you to live. But that's why you come to Him to receive it as a gift. You can't earn it.

We're not worthy of it. But God loves us. And He will save you right now if you will pray this prayer in your heart.

I'm going to say it out loud. You say it in your heart and your mind to the Lord right where you're at. Here's that prayer.

I invite you to say it with me. Dear Jesus, I admit to You that I am a sinner. I've broken Your laws.

I've lived my life far from You, without You. But I need You. And right now, I open my life to You.

And I invite You to come in and change me. I'm transferring my trust, my faith from anything that I would do, any works that I would do, anything of going to church, nothing that I would do, but totally to what You've done in paying for my sin at the cross and living a perfect life and willing to be, to impute that to me, to give it to me as a gift, to make me a Christian. Lord, I ask You right now, come into my life.

Make me a Christian. I receive You by faith. I put my trust in You from this moment on.

And Lord, I don't know how to live the Christian life, but please show me. As You show me, give me the strength so I can follow You. When it comes to that time for me to die, Lord, I can't handle that.

I'm going to trust Your promises that when I die, You will take me to heaven. Thank You for hearing my prayer. While your heads are bowed and your eyes are closed, if you prayed that prayer, nobody looking around, if you prayed that prayer and meant it, God looked down, He heard that prayer, and He saved you today.

And I'd like to be your witness that you prayed that prayer today. And I could be your witness right now. If you put your hand up high enough that I could see it.

Put it up, then put it down. I see all these hands all over the room. Just put it up, then put it down.

God bless all of you. Up in the balcony, I prayed that prayer. I want you to be my witness today, John.

Put your hand up right now, then put it down. Yes, yes. God bless you.

When you get home, you have a Bible. Turn to the book of Romans, chapter 10, and verse 13. The book of Romans, chapter 10, verse 13.

There's a promise for you. Whosoever, whosoever means anybody, means you today. It meant me when I called.

Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord. How do you call? You pray. That's what you did.

You asked Christ to save you. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, the Bible says, shall be saved. That's what God did when you called.

That's God's promise. Put your name and the date today in the margin. This is your spiritual birthday.

This is the day. God said He saved you. Trust Him.

He'll start to open up things for you as you walk with Him. Lord Jesus, thank You for all of those that prayed this prayer. And I pray You would bear witness with their spirit.

You would start to let them know on the inner man that they belong to You. Give them peace. Let them trust Your promise.

And show them the next steps of walking with You, not to get saved, but because You've saved them. And they want to have fellowship with You. Lord, thank You for our time together.

Bless the remaining sessions tonight, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. You're dismissed.

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