

John's Method of Persuading His Readers

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Preacher: Edward Lobb

[0 : 00] We're coming now to our Bible reading this week, and you will find that in the New Testament in John's Gospel. John's Gospel, chapter 19, that's on page 905 of our church Bibles.

It's been a few weeks since we've been in this great chapter of the Bible, and where John the Evangelist is declaring to us the true significance of Jesus' trial and death.

So John chapter 19, and we will begin reading at verse 17. Hear the word of the Lord. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of the skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

There they crucified him, and with two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross.

It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city.

[1 : 21] And it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, Do not write the King of the Jews, but rather, This man said, I am King of the Jews.

Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts.

One part for each soldier. Also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see whose it shall be. This was to fulfill the scripture, which says, They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. So the soldiers did these things.

But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, He said to his mother, Woman, behold your son.

[2 : 40] Then he said to the disciple, Behold your mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said to fulfill the scripture, I thirst.

A jar full of sour wine stood there. So they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, It is finished.

And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Since it was the day of preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for that Sabbath was a high day, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness.

[4 : 02] His testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth, that you also may believe. For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Not one of his bones will be broken. And again, another scripture says, they will look on him whom they have pierced.

Well, amen. And may God bless to us this, his word. Well, let's turn to John's Gospel, chapter 19 again.

And my subject for this morning, or my title for this morning, is John's method of persuading his readers.

Evangelism, according to the New Testament, is a kind of persuasion. The apostles are seeking to persuade us, to help us to believe, and to give us the grounds for belief in Christ. A number of years ago, Mel Gibson, the actor, produced a film called The Passion of the Christ.

[5 : 12] I guess it was about 10 years ago. I didn't see it myself, because I heard some of the reports on it, heard that it portrayed the crucifixion of Jesus with a great sense of vividness and violence.

And I didn't think, I didn't trust myself to be able to watch it, really. I thought it would be too much for me. But a lot of people went to see it, I guess some of you did. And we prayed at the time that it might be useful in bringing some people to Christ in faith, because it perhaps brought home the reality of the crucifixion.

Now, I raise this issue of Mel Gibson's film because the description that we have of the crucifixion here in John chapter 19 is very different.

The violence is briefly mentioned, but only in the most understated way. So, for example, in chapter 19, verse 1, John tells us boldly that Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.

But there's no mention of the type of whips that were used, no mention of the number of lashes that Jesus received, no details at all, just the bare fact of the flogging. And when we get to verse 18, it is, if anything, even more understated.

[6 : 25] Verse 18, there they crucified him. That's all he says. There they crucified him and with him two others, one on either side and Jesus between them. There's no mention of nails and hammers, no phrases used like unbearable pain, no direct mention of blood or sweat or stench or anything like that.

John spares us the vivid and the gruesome details. You sense that the last thing that he is doing is trying to manipulate our emotions. Now, modern films of all kinds are in the business of squeezing our emotions for all they're worth.

You might say the essence of modern filmmaking is to give the viewer a powerful emotional experience, even to batter the emotions. But John is not like that.

He tells his story in a very plain, matter-of-fact way. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as you read their accounts of the crucifixion, they're just the same in this respect.

So why does John not treat us as the modern filmmaker would? Why does he not seek to wring our emotions in the way that Mel Gibson might want to?

[7 : 35] Well, the answer must be that he is interested in something else. There's something else that he wants the reader to see. Now, remember that John's gospel is a kind of long sermon, a sermon of 21 chapters, in which he is trying to persuade the reader of something very important concerning Jesus.

And if you want to know what that is, in fact, let me encourage you to turn over the page to chapter 20 and verses 30 and 31. And this shows us just what John is trying to do.

These two verses really are the key to understanding the purpose of John's gospel. Now, Jesus, verse 30, Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book.

So John is telling us that he has been very selective in choosing the events and episodes that he wants to write down. So he did many other things which are not written down, but these are written so that you, the reader, may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

So that's the agenda that shapes everything in the 21 chapters of John's gospel. John here is seeking to lay out the reasons why any reader, Jew or Gentile, ancient or modern, should come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that is, God's anointed Son, the Messiah, the King.

[9 : 03] So John's approach here is a reasoned approach. He's seeking to persuade. He's not interested in battering our emotions. He knows perfectly well that an emotional response may be briefly powerful, but will probably fizzle out quickly.

But equally, he knows that if the mind is convinced and persuaded, then a person can really become a Christian and can really live a permanently changed life. What we need is solid conviction.

We need to be persuaded. We don't need emotional fireworks. I'm not suggesting that the emotions are not involved. Of course, we're to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

And if that doesn't include the emotions, then I'm a Dutchman. But it's not right, it's not at the heart of the thing, this persuasion here, persuasion of our understanding.

So the question is, how does John go about this business of persuading us in our passage here in chapter 19? Well, the answer is, he shows us how the events that he's describing are fulfilling the

scriptures of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament.

[10:13] His point is that the death of Jesus and various details to do with his death fulfill a number of prophecies in the Old Testament. And the fact that they do so shows that the death of Jesus was not some random event.

It was not some tragic accident of history. It was the supremely important thing that the one true God, the God of Israel, had planned since time immemorial.

Now let me try and open this subject up a little bit. If you were a gospel preacher in the first century AD, let's say in about the year 35 or 40 or 45 AD, where would you get the text for your sermon? And for us today, we have a text, don't we? Here's my text. I can hold it up in my hand. We always preach with a text. But back then, where would you get the text for your sermon? Imagine yourself standing in the marketplace or perhaps in the open-air stadium or a lecture hall or a simple village somewhere in Judea.

What are you holding in your hand as you preach your sermon? You're not holding John's gospel, are you? Because John's gospel wasn't written until about 85 AD. You're not holding Matthew, Mark, or Luke either because they didn't appear until about 60 AD.

[11:32] You're not even holding Paul's letters because Paul's letters, the first one, wasn't written until about 49 AD. What you have in your hand as you preach the gospel is sections or excerpts from the law of Moses, the Psalms, and the Old Testament prophets.

prophets. And you are expounding these sections from the Old Testament. And your point is that these Old Testament prophecies are prophecies of the coming of Christ.

So your method is to say to your audience, friends, I want to show you now from the Hebrew scriptures that Jesus of Nazareth is the expected Christ. Let me give you an example of this from the preaching of Paul the Apostle.

No need to turn this up, but I'll read you a few verses from the beginning of Acts chapter 17, which records Paul's visit, his very brief visit to Thessalonica when the church there was founded.

At Thessalonica, says Luke, Paul went into the synagogue as was his custom and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead and saying, this Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ.

[12:50] So Paul's preaching method in about 48 AD was to take the Hebrew scriptures in his hand and to expound to his audience who would have been largely Jews or Gentiles perhaps who knew their Old Testaments quite well, he would expound that the sufferings and the resurrection of the Christ, that's always at the heart of the gospel, the sufferings and then the resurrection, that they were all clearly foretold in the scriptures and to top it all, the Christ was none other than Jesus of Nazareth.

And when you think of it, this was the method that Jesus himself used. You remember on the first Easter Sunday evening when he met those two disciples, Cleopas and the other one, on the way to Emmaus and they were looking sad and he asks them why they're looking sad and they have their discussion.

And he says to them, oh foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Don't you know your prophets he's saying to them? Don't you know your Old Testament?

Was it not necessary? If you knew the Old Testament you would realize it was necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory. The suffering and the entry into glory.

It's the same two things. And then Luke goes on beginning with Moses and all the prophets. Moses, first five books of the Bible and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

[14:17] So this is the method of gospel preaching which the first Christians used following the example of Jesus himself. They would take the writings of Moses and the Old Testament prophets and the Psalms and then show from them that Christianity is not a departure from the Old Testament.

It is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. You could put it a bit more provocatively like this. You could say that Christianity today is not a departure from Judaism.

It is the fulfillment of Judaism. Judaism, Old Testament Judaism is the bud which comes to full flower in Christ but it's the same tree.

The good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus is the very thing that the Hebrew scriptures have been preparing the world for for many centuries. I know Jesus isn't exactly named as such in the Old Testament but the Old Testament is all about him.

Now let me develop this a little bit further before we see just how John does it in his 19th chapter. The key question is how does Jesus fulfill the law, the prophets and the other parts of the Old Testament?

[15:31] What does this fulfillment mean? How do we understand it? Well the idea of fulfillment is not difficult to understand in the Bible and it's like this. This is how it works. Some significant element in the Old Testament story of Israel sets a pattern and that pattern centuries later is mirrored in the life of Jesus in some aspect of his experience, his deeds, his words, his works and his role.

Now it's as simple as that. There are many different elements but you have this element or that element in the Old Testament and it's mirrored by this aspect of the life of Jesus.

The pattern or the template is set back then and Jesus fits the pattern. Now the fit is sometimes perfect and very precise a bit like Cinderella's foot in the glass slipper but at other times the fit is less precise but it's still very clearly there.

So let me give you a few examples of just how Jesus mirrors the Old Testament patterns. Well first and most obviously there are the great roles of prophet, priest and king.

Moses. He is the template of the prophet. He's the original prophet. All later prophecies stem from him and expound him. So he's the prophet and the prophet speaks the words of God.

[16:58] Moses spoke them and then caused them to be written down. So we have there in the words of Moses the authoritative verbal revelation of God. Jesus comes 15 centuries later as the last word.

He is the prophet who embodies God's verbal revelation. In fact not only does Jesus speak the word of God he is the word of God. In the beginning was the word.

Jesus is the word. He is both the message and the messenger. So he fulfills the pattern of the prophet set by Moses. Then Jesus is the priest.

Now the Old Testament priest if you ask the question what does the Old Testament priest do remember the word mediator or go between because that's at the heart of it. The priest was a go between representing God to man and man to God.

And Jesus fulfills that pattern by being both God and man. As God he speaks to man and rescues man and cares for man and as man he bears the penalty of man's sins and accepts the wages of sin as our representative.

[18:11] And then Jesus is the king. Now the figure of the king of Israel begins to emerge way back in the book of Deuteronomy but it comes to full flower in the person of David.

Jesus is the son of David but he's also David's lord and he is the king of his people not just for a few years like an earthly monarch but forever.

And then Jesus fulfills not only individual figures like the figures of Moses and David he also fulfills Old Testament institutions. Remember when I first discovered that I was rather shocked by it.

How could Jesus fulfill an institution? But he does. He does. So for example think of the Old Testament sacrificial system. That's an institution. The heart of the Old Testament sacrificial idea is that blood must be shed in death.

Not just a little bit of blood like you might give at the blood donor clinic of one pint. It's not like that. It's blood shed in death and blood shed in death brings atonement and forgiveness for sinners.

[19:15] As the epistle to the Hebrews puts it without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Now the Old Testament sacrificial system although given by God and taught by God was ultimately ineffective.

It covered sin over so to speak but it pointed forward through history to the final sacrificial victim whose death once and for all really brought forgiveness.

So it means that Jesus is both the priest and the sacrificial victim. And that's why John in his gospel boldly calls Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And in the book of Revelation I think he uses that term Lamb of God about 28 times to remind us that he is the Passover Lamb who fulfills the whole figure of the Passover. Then as well as institutions there are great biblical themes which are developed through the Old Testament but then find their fulfillment and their completion in the person of Jesus.

For example covenant. God enters into a solemn covenant with his people. His promise to his people and these are the words right at the heart of the covenant.

[20 : 28] Remember this and you remember what the covenant is all about. He promises I will be your God and you will be my people and I will dwell among you. As simple as that.

I will be yours you will be mine and I'll live with you. He reveals his covenant gradually over time. First of all to Noah then to Abraham then to Moses and then to David.

And at each stage in this revelation the covenant becomes more detailed and more explicit. But it finds its fulfillment in Jesus whose blood shed in death seals the new covenant.

New and final and unsupersedable. Here's another. Take the theme of marriage. Now we know where marriage begins it begins in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve but it's fulfilled finally in the marriage of Jesus with his bride who is the church.

Or think of substitution. Now we find substitution way back as early as Genesis chapter 22 perhaps even earlier than that but certainly in Genesis 22 in the story of Abraham taking his beloved son Isaac up into the mountains by command of God to sacrifice him.

[21 : 41] But you remember the story he's just about to plunge in the knife when the angel of the Lord cries out and says to him don't do it the Lord will provide a lamb for the offering and he looks up Abraham looks up and there is a lamb or a ram caught in a bush nearby and the Lord tells Abraham to sacrifice this lamb in place of Isaac.

And so Jesus centuries later is sacrificed in our place as our substitute. He matches the template so therefore he fulfills the theme of substitution.

And then and this brings us to John chapter 19 there are many instances where specific Old Testament passages or verses are fulfilled by something that Jesus says or does or is or experiences.

And this is what John the evangelist is interested in as he tells the story of the death of Christ. This is why he hardly mentions the violence of Good Friday. His purpose is to show us how the events of Good Friday fulfill a number of things prophesied in the Old Testament.

Now there are four places four points in chapter 19 where John does this so I want us to look at these in turn. The first one comes at verse 24.

[23 : 02] Would you look at chapter 19 verse 24 with me? The soldiers at this point have just crucified Jesus. He's still alive but he's been crucified and of course they have taken all his clothes off him because decent clothes were very valuable.

We live in a different age don't we? We can pop into this shop or that shop. How much does a shirt cost, Phil? Depends where you shop. That's a good reply, isn't it?

You can pick up a t-shirt for a few quid, can't you? Even that shirt of yours, Phil. Yes. Anyway, clothes, they are on the whole they're very cheap but then you had to make all your clothes by hand.

So this clothing that Jesus was wearing was obviously valuable. Why crucify a man and leave his clothes on him? Another thing of course was that it was that much more humiliating for a man to be crucified naked.

So the Roman soldiers in verse 23 divide the spoils. Now there seem to have been five items of clothing because there are four items one for each soldier and these four items would probably have been a belt a pair of sandals a head covering or cap and some kind of an outer robe but then there was a fifth article as well the tunic and that would have been a single garment worn next to the skin.

[24 : 24] Well five into four won't go so the four soldiers cast lots for this fifth item. They say in verse 24 let's not tear it we'll cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.

And then John says and isn't this just a little bit surprising? He says this was to fulfill the scripture which says they divided my garments among them and for my clothing they cast lots.

And that quotation is lifted straight out of Psalm 22. That's the long psalm that begins my God my God why have you forsaken me? And John rubs the point home in the final sentence of verse 24. So he says the soldiers did these things. Why does he say so the soldiers did these things? I think there's something rather Scottish about that word so.

When I first came to live in Scotland a number of years ago now I'd just arrived and I'll tell you the first time I heard so used in this kind of way. It was summertime and I'd entered one or two chickens in the poultry classes at the Peebles agricultural show in the summer.

[25 : 35] So there I was looking at chickens in these pens and there was a young boy there aged about 15. He was from Ayrshire and he was a chicken keeper as well. So he and I got talking about one particular wazo hen that was sitting in the pen there and he said to me it's a very fine bird that so it is.

I listened with interest. I thought hmm we don't do that in England. We don't say so it is in England quite like that but it's a good way of emphasizing something isn't it? For example it's a drich day so it is.

She's a cantankerous old lady so she is. You'd never say that would you? It's the sort of way in which we do sometimes speak isn't it? So the soldiers did these things so they did emphasizing the fact that this prophecy from Psalm 22 must certainly be fulfilled.

Now Psalm 22 the whole psalm is an agonized outcry of a man at the extremity of suffering. My God my God why have you forsaken me?

That's how it begins that's the first verse and this whole psalm is a call for a rescue which never comes and David the psalmist King David writes later on in the psalm and just listen to this for dogs encompass me he's not talking about poodles not that sort of dog but human beings who are prowling around like scavengers dogs encompass me a company of evildoers encircles me they have pierced my hands and my feet I can count all my bones they stare and gloat over me they divide my garments among them and for my clothing they cast lots now isn't that an extraordinary prophecy of the crucifixion written something like a thousand years beforehand who could have taught David to write they have pierced my hands and my feet the Jews didn't execute each other by crucifixion they used stoning how did David know that let's look on to the second place where John tells us that the scripture is being fulfilled verse 28 28 after this

[27 : 48] Jesus knowing that all was now finished said to fulfill the scripture I thirst now the quotation here isn't exactly word for word you won't find that exact phrase I thirst anywhere in the Old Testament but what John has in mind is a very close parallel in Psalm 69 and Psalm 69 is again a psalm written by King David let me read two verses from that psalm which again come from a man who is in the extreme of suffering at the hands of evil oppressors David says reproaches have broken my heart so that I'm in despair I looked for pity but there was none and for comforters but I found none they gave me poison for food and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink now the thing that links those two questions those two quotations from the psalms together is not just their subject matter of extreme suffering but even more their writer

King David think of who King David was in relation to Jesus he was back then the Lord's anointed he was the Messiah and God had told him through the prophet Nathan that there would always be a king of his family line to reign upon the throne of Israel so here is Jesus the king of David's line the Lord's anointed carrying out his kingly duties in a strange and terrible place the cross at Golgotha so John is saying to us as he quotes from these two psalms think of David the great king of Israel and now look up to the cross and you will see there the greatest king of Israel the king of Israel who is king forever now the third quotation from the Old Testament comes at verse 36 let me read that verse these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled not one of his bones will be broken now the original verses behind that quotation come twice in the law of Moses in Exodus chapter 12 and Numbers chapter 9 and both of those passages are describing how the Passover lamb or goat is to be killed slaughtered and prepared and eaten so for example the verse in Exodus reads the Passover shall be eaten in one house you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house and you shall not break any of its bones now that's a rather surprising regulation the lamb has been killed after all but it's a regulation which is not explained either in Exodus or in Numbers we have to wait 1500 years for the real explanation here in John chapter 19 but John tells us carefully in verses 31 2 and 3 that the Roman soldiers did not break

Jesus' legs now you probably know this but the reason why a crucified criminal's legs was sometimes broken while he hung on the cross was to hasten death and the reason for that I mean it's pretty gruesome but if you're hanging on the cross your legs are giving you a bit of support and helping you to breathe a bit better asphyxiation is what finishes you off on the cross apparently so if the legs are broken you slump down and death therefore is hastened and the Jewish leaders wanted to hasten the death of Jesus and these two other criminals because it was a Friday and the next day the Passover Sabbath was a big festival in their calendar and they didn't want their special Sabbath to be polluted by their still being living crucified men hanging on crosses at Jerusalem apparently it could take two or even three days for a crucified man to die so they asked Pilate to

have the legs of the three victims broken so that they would die quickly and the corpses could be decently disposed of before the Sabbath began but when they got to Jesus they found that he was already dead therefore no bone breaking was necessary and thus says John the scripture was fulfilled showing that Jesus is truly the Passover lamb the Passover lamb for all time the lamb who was slain as the book of Revelation describes him then the fourth

Old Testament quotation comes in the next verse verse 37 and again another scripture says they will look on him whom they have pierced now the reference to the piercing takes us back to verse 34 and to the moment when one of the soldiers pierces the side of Jesus with the thrust of a spear though Jesus was of course already dead at this point now this time verse 37 the quotation comes from the Old Testament prophet Zechariah if you want the reference it's Zechariah 12 10 and in this part of Zechariah's prophecy God himself is speaking about the future restoration of Jerusalem and of God's people and God says this I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy so that when they look on me on him whom they have pierced they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child now do you see there how God identifies himself as the one who is pierced when they look on me on him whom they have pierced the one who is pierced is the one that God calls me isn't that striking so what John is saying to us in these four

Old Testament quotations is this he's identifying Jesus through all of these passages he's telling us who Jesus is in the two quotations from the Psalms John is telling us that Jesus is great David's greater son the Messiah of David's line who is king of Israel forever and who shows the power and glory the high point of his kingly reign as he submits to crucifixion then the quotation about the bones not being broken identifies Jesus as God's Passover lamb the lamb slain to atone for the sins of the world and the quotation from Zechariah identifies Jesus as the representative the manifestation of God himself who is pierced for the sake of the restoration of God's people now that is what John is interested in not in the violence of the crucifixion horrible though that was I mean think of it John is writing this account up some 50 years after the events the violence in his memory has long disappeared thank God

[34 : 51] John has had 50 years to come to terms with all of that what remains however and is perpetually important is the identity of the one who is hanging on the cross if he's just some other malefactor we can forget him but if he is the son of David and the Passover lamb and the pierced representative of God himself we can never forget him well now here's the question why do the evangelists why do Matthew Mark Luke and John write up their accounts of Jesus his life like this why are they so keen to demonstrate that Jesus again and again fulfills the patterns and templates and predictions of the Old Testament well the reason is simply that God is demonstrating to us that he means what he says he is showing us that if he promises something or prophesies something he is going to follow through on what he has promised and therefore we learn to trust him deeply that's our response to trust him think of the way we relate to each other in our friendships and human relationships we have a deep and instinctive understanding that a person's integrity and trustworthiness are bound up with whether that person is willing to carry through what is promised there are some people about whom we might say with a bit of a shake of the head oh Sebastian yeah well he seems a very nice bloke when you meet him but he's not really reliable you never know if he's actually going to do what he says he will do then there are other people about whom we say

Josephine she's terrific she's solid gold if she says she will do something you can be quite certain it will be done and done properly now it's God himself who is the fountainhead of all integrity and trustworthiness and the evangelists are showing us that when God makes a promise or a prophecy or when God provides a pattern or a template he's going to follow through he will always keep his promises he will always fulfill the patterns set in the Old Testament another way of putting this is to say that God is bound by his word he causes himself he decides to be bound by what he has said his word is his bond has he promised that not a bone of the Passover lamb is to be broken well he follows it through not a bone of Jesus' body was broken has he promised that people will look on the one whom they have pierced yes he has and so it happens and there's a further and very important implication to all this if Jesus' coming to earth and his teaching and death and resurrection if they all fulfilled God's promises made in the past we can be equally sure that what God and Jesus have promised for the future for our future will also be fulfilled this pattern of promise and fulfillment didn't cease to be active 2000 years ago when Jesus died and was raised

not at all the Bible contains many wonderful promises for the future which we can look forward to having fulfilled and we can look forward to it with complete confidence for example

Jesus says in John chapter 6 this is the will of my father that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him shall have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day that is a great wonderful promise for the future the last day has not yet come but it will and on that day Jesus is promising that everyone who has died as a Christian believer will be raised up to be with him what a comfort that will be to us the next time we go to the funeral of a loved one who has died as a Christian I'm sure many of you have been to that kind of funeral but just imagine it it's painful and difficult isn't it the curtain closes around the coffin it's a bad moment that isn't it or the coffin is lowered feet down into the soil of the necropolis that's a bad moment too you bring your handkerchief out you need to you're allowed to we're sad aren't we of course but then at that moment you remember the words of Jesus

I will raise him up on the last day and then you say to yourself was there anything that Jesus ever commanded or said or promised that did not come true did he say to the wind and the waves be still only to find that the boat capsized a moment later did he say to a demon come out only to have the demon stay in did he say to a paralyzed person get up and walk only to find the poor person glued to the floor did he say to Lazarus Lazarus come out only to hear Lazarus say no thank you I'm happy where I am whatever the father or the son promises us in the Bible will happen has God promised us resurrection and eternal life in the holy city and the new creation with his tongue in his cheek what kind of a God is he does he play around with us no he is bound by his words he is bound himself by his words so friends as we can continue with what I hope is a deeply ingrained habit in all of us of reading the Bible again and again let's bear in mind that the whole Bible is structured on the basis of promise and fulfillment of pattern and corresponding fit

God has not given it to us like this as a kind of intellectual puzzle his purpose is not to confuse us or to bamboozle us his purpose is to bring us deep and wonderful assurance that's why he does it he wants to assure us assurance that what he says he will do he will do this is what Christian faith is it's believing that what God has said will happen will happen it's as simple as that God has said it I believe it John sets it out like this because he wants his readers to say as they read this oh yes of course pattern corresponds to pattern fulfillment corresponds to promise and prophecy and Jesus fulfills it all therefore I can trust the truthfulness of the gospel and therefore I can on the best and most solid grounds believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that by believing I will have life in his name let's bow our heads and let's thank the Lord God for it

[41 : 46] God our father we bow our heads and our hearts before you so thankful that in your tender mercy and love for us you have given us these deep assurances from the Bible we pray that you will write them in our hearts ever more deeply and that as we continue to read your words so you will bless us with a growing assurance and we ask it in Jesus name amen amen you