

## **Bible Special 06-07-11a**

This is the 11th of July, 2006. We continue tonight our study of Orthodox Christianity and all of those things that offer themselves as alternatives to faith in God through Christ. Let's take a moment at the outset to make sure that we are in a position to listen to the teaching of God's Holy Spirit as He makes God's Word real to us.

It is important that we understand that it is not our strength, it's not our intelligence. It is God's grace that allows us to understand truth and to live in the light of it. Shall we pray? Father, we are so grateful for Your grace, for Your plan of salvation, for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ who came to this earth in love and sacrificed Himself on our behalf.

He was buried and rose again the third day and now sits at Your right hand waiting for that day when He will return and gather us to Himself and implement the next phase of Your plan in the Millennial Kingdom. We thank You for the time that is left to us on this earth to learn and to grow and to prepare ourselves for the eternal future. We pray that our study tonight will contribute toward that goal.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We're in something of an unusual study in that we are not traveling verse by verse through a book.

We are instead comparing Christianity to the religions of the world. Why be a Christian? Someone will come up to you and say, well, so you're a Christian and you believe the Bible. Well, Muslims believe the Koran.

Hindus believe the Vedic hymns. Buddhists believe Buddha. It's all just religion.

One is just like another. Just pick your flavor. It's like walking into Brahms and choosing a flavor of ice cream.

All equally good and equally bad. There's no difference. As we have examined the elements of Orthodox Christianity which are under three headings, what's heading number one? The person and work of Jesus Christ.

That is unique. There is nothing like it anywhere else in the world. No other religion has a Jesus Christ who is the Redeemer, Savior, propitiation for sin, satisfaction of the righteousness and justice of God.

What's the description of the Lord Jesus? Our little summation of it? He is undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever. Buddha is not undiminished deity. He isn't any kind of deity.

Never claimed to be deity. Muhammad is not deity. Never claimed to be deity.

Nor is Joseph Smith or Charles Taze Russell or Arian or Confucius or anybody else you want to

look at in the world. There is only one person in history who is the God-Man, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind and that is Jesus Christ. Now, people don't believe that claim.

They don't believe the witness of Scripture. They don't believe the witness of God the Holy Spirit. And that's fine.

That's their privilege. We are free to choose. Everybody is free to choose.

But everyone does make the choice. You say, and people will come up and say, oh, this whole thing about Jesus. What about the aborigines? What about the ancient China man growing up in say 800 B.C. over there in China? How could he possibly know about Jesus Christ? What about an Australian aborigine? What about a pygmy someplace who grew up in the jungle and never heard the Gospel? No missionary ever came? How could God possibly toss somebody like that in the lake of fire for rejecting Christ when He never heard of Him? Well, people who ask that question have not studied the Bible.

They don't know Scriptural truth. What does the Word of God say about those who have never heard? Everyone has heard. Because the first thing which every normal, rational, I'm not talking about people who are too young to understand or people who have some sort of brain damage or congenital retardation or something, but your normal human beings ever since Adam and Eve and Cain and Seth and all of the descendants that came there from, normal people are all confronted with the truth of God.

Now, how is that possible? How could the information get to them? What about people before there was a Bible? People before Moses? People in Job's day? How did they come to understand? What about all these people in far off places living by the river under a banana tree or something? How could they possibly know? You don't have to have a Bible. You don't have to have a missionary because God has put the knowledge of Himself in the heart of every man. This is what Scripture says.

Read the Old Testament. Read Isaiah. Read Romans chapter 1 in particular.

What may be known of God is manifest in creation. Everyone can look around and say this is remarkable. Where did life come from? Where did this manifest design come from? Accidents don't produce more and more complex things.

Accidents break complex things. Anybody with an ounce of common sense can look, and when they find a watch laying in the sand, they don't say, well, look at how all of that silicon and metal and stuff and plastic accidentally fell together and made this watch. That was a real happy accident.

Lookie here. I wonder if more accidents like this have happened somewhere. Maybe I'll find some other watches laying in the beach.

When you find a watch, what do you say? This watch was made by Bulova or Seiko or Citizen or

Radio Shack or Timex and somebody has lost it and here it is. But we don't think that it just washed up out of the random forces. We can recognize design when we see it.

Some of us have had discussions about how... Have you ever heard of SETI? The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence? There's a project, and you can get on the web and you can... They have radio telescopes that are scanning the heavens and recording the radiation and the signals that they might find out there. And it's kind of like... Oh, some of these movies you might have seen where there's a nuclear holocaust, the big bomb goes off, somebody crawls out from under the rubble and they say, oh, I wonder if there's anybody left and they turn on the radio and they search the band all the way from the left to the right and back again and they're saying, I'm not picking up anything. All I get is static.

And they keep turning and turning. They're hoping someone survives. Somebody is broadcasting and they keep scanning and scanning.

All they hear is just this random static. Well, that's what you get when you point your radio telescope at the heavens. Once in a while, you might get some sort of a burst of heavier static because you've aimed your radio telescope at a source of greater random radiation or even a cycling thing like a pulsar or a binary star.

But these are very simple, easily explained things. You don't get Mutt and Jeff. You don't get Amos and Andy.

You don't get Superman. You don't get Star Trek, The Next Generation, Episode 7 of Season 3 coming back on your radio telescope. You don't get Morse Code.

You don't get somebody going dit-dit-dit, da-da-da, dit-dit-dit, SOS, save our solar system or whatever it might be coming back the other way. It's all random. Well, there are people who believe.

It's like Mulder on the X-Files. He's got the poster on there. He says, I want to believe.

I'm giving you all these TV references because I know some of you have actually seen TV a time or two. And you know what I'm talking about. What does he say? I want to believe.

I want to believe that there's ETs out there. I want to believe there's old green men from Mars. I want to believe that there are these egg-shaped, bulbous-eyed people out there who are going to come to Earth and be wonderful, beneficent helpers of mankind.

They're going to share their knowledge and their technology and make the world a better place. They're not going to be great giant lizard monsters coming to devour us or war the worlds. It's going to be something wonderful.

So, SETI, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, they scan the radio waves. What are they looking for? How will they know when they find it? What do you think they'll find? Well,

mathematics is thought to be a universal language. And so they think, well, if someone started sending the prime numbers, remember what a prime number is? You all have been through grade school.

What is a prime number? It's a number that doesn't have any factors other than itself and one. Six is not a prime number because you can multiply two times three and get six. But seven, you can't multiply any two numbers together and get seven.

It's a prime number. So, three is a prime, seven is a prime, eleven is a prime, thirteen is a prime, seventeen is a prime, and so on. You have these prime numbers, twenty-three and that kind of thing.

So, if you hear some distant, faint signal and it's going poof, poof, poof, then it has seven and then it has eleven, and you get these in order, and you say, look, somebody is sending an intelligent signal, right? And you would recognize it as intelligent because some random pulsar binary bursting something or other way off in another galaxy somewhere is not going to be sending prime numbers. That speaks of intelligence. It speaks of order and understanding of something, right? Well, look around.

Look at the complexity of the human body. Look at the complexity of biological life. Look at how it interacts and how it's got repair mechanisms.

It's got response and defense mechanisms. It's got built-in systems for sensing heat and sensing light and sensing other organisms. And there are behaviors that are programmed in.

Ask an evolutionist sometime, how does the complex behavior of animals get transmitted from generation to generation? Because they can say, well, you know, we've got the DNA and here's the gene that makes this part of a wing and this part of a beak and this part of a bird's eye. Well, how does the bird navigate when it migrates in the winter and in the summer? You've seen the Vs of geese flying over. How do they know where to go? Well, how come they don't end up in Anchorage instead of down south where it's warm? What keeps them from flying up there to Lake Michigan and just freezing into the ice in the wintertime? How come they don't end up there in Saskatchewan or something? Why is it they always fly south and at the right time they fly north again? Anybody that's been in California, San Juan Capistrano and those birds that return, how do they know to do that? How did that evolve? How did San Juan Capistrano evolve as a destination? Well, they can't explain it because it is a product of design.

It would be easier to explain how you could take bits of metal and some springs and some pieces of plastic and throw it in your dryer and put it on for a really long time and open it every now and again and wait and see if it goes together to make an alarm clock or a toaster or a microwave oven or a little MP3 player for you. Just put the ingredients in there and toss them around enough and out will come this wonderful complex thing. Well, listen, all of those appliances I just named are orders of magnitude simpler than some of the simplest forms of biological life and yet science tries to tell us that it's just a happy accident and the happy

accident figured out how to reproduce.

Now, see if you can get an evolutionist to explain how male-female reproduction evolved. How do you separate organisms into boys and girls and then they figure out, oh look, we can come together and make babies, have offspring. How does that evolve? How do you start with less than boys and girls and how does that happen? I mean, I'll let you think through that on your own.

I'm not going to go down that trail very far but you think about it. There's no explanation for that. There are complex systems that don't work if they're only evolved halfway.

You don't get any advantage from them unless they're fully developed and science has no way to explain that because it is only explicable in terms of design. God has put the knowledge of himself in the heart of every man. What may be known of God is manifest in creation and most people who don't think there is design, who believe in evolution and believe in random accidents bringing about life and so on have started with a desire to disbelieve in God.

They have made the decision. They don't want to believe in God. They want to find a way to explain the world without God and that's their starting point.

Well, as soon as you get rid of God, now there is no designer for creation and so you've got to find some way to explain what God did. And so you say, well, if there was enough time and enough accidents, everything could happen. I sat down a couple of weeks ago just on a lark and I thought, I'm going to estimate how many mutations it would take to get from a one-celled organism to mankind.

And all of the other life forms that are on the planet. Now, keep in mind that science can measure the rate of mutations right now. We have a lot of cosmic radiation and they can put organisms under radiation and they can bombard it and they can goof up their reproductive DNA.

And so when they're using fruit flies, they like to use fruit flies because they reproduce very rapidly. You can get many generations just in a few days. And so they'll say, well, I'm going to take this fruit fly and I'm going to nuke him and then I'm going to have him have some babies and let's see what they look like.

Well, some of them have shriveled wings and some of them have backward legs and some of them have goofy eyes and it really messes them up. You can imagine if you take your DNA and start shooting it full of holes, well, you're going to get these weird looking crippled little fruit flies. And they say, well, here's the rate of damage.

Here's the rate of mutations that can happen where there is a splicing error or a copying error or a destruction or a rearrangement. And virtually all mutations are harmful. The vast majority of them kill the offspring.

The little offspring doesn't even live. But if they do live, they have some sort of major defect. The best they can do is get a mutation that doesn't kill and doesn't maim the little creature.

And it's called a benign mutation. It doesn't do any real harm and it just sort of gets carried in the genome as trash. But they have to really work hard to even try to say that they have made a mutation that's beneficial.

Now, they can go in and cross. Have you seen this thing where they take one animal and some widely different thing like a plant and they'll mix. They found the gene that makes lightning bugs glow in the dark.

And so they'll mix that with corn and they get like glow-in-the-dark corn. I mean, they do this sort of weird thing. And they say, oh, look, see what the wonders of evolution are.

Now, what would you and I with our common sense call that? Here's a designer that is taking parts and consciously and very carefully with great planning and great effort putting things together and making a new thing. Do we accidentally get glow-in-the-dark corn? I don't think so. So what is that an argument for? Is that an argument for there being an intelligence who put the design together and it takes an intelligence to play productive games with that sort of design? Well, this is the kind of faulty thinking.

This is the kind of deception that is rife in the world today. This is the kind of deception that is found in religions of the world because everyone... Now, you can't argue somebody else into believing that there is a God. And guess what? You don't have to and you're not supposed to.

A lot of Christianity today tells Christians, you should go argue people into being a Christian. You should go evangelize them. You should go convince them.

No. No. No.

Do not do that. That is not your job. Now, let me ask you this.

Let's pretend we're all back in the Garden of Eden. God has finished all of the animal creation. It's the sixth day.

And God says, now I'm going to make man. And so He stoops down and He starts scooping the dirt together. And He starts forming Adam out of the dust of the ground.

And He makes His limbs and He makes His feet and He makes His face and He makes His ears and He makes His eyes. If you've ever made figures out of clay, you know how fun it is to shape a thing and you get it almost finished. Now, when God is just about finished with Adam, and you happen to be there by some miracle, would you say, oh, that's really great.

Excuse me, Lord. And you just push Him out of the way and start trying to finish up Adam for God? Would you try to finish God's job for Him? Push Him out of the way and say, I can handle this now. I see where you've got the basics.

Let me just finish it up. Well, you'd be putting a third ear on Adam right in the middle of his forehead or you'd be messing him up in some way. That's God's job.

That's what God does. God is the Creator. God is the Designer.

No angel even thought of elbowing God out of the way and finishing up the work of creating Adam. Well, guess what? The Bible says that the work of evangelizing, the work of convicting the world of sin and righteousness and judgment and of the existence of God, that's God's job. God the Holy Spirit, Jesus told the disciples right before He left, He said, look, God the Holy Spirit does this.

He convicts the world. Now, if you're going to go tackle somebody at the airport or go to their door and knock on it and open it up and say, hi there, I'm a Christian and you should be one too, guess what? You're elbowing God the Holy Spirit out of the way and trying to do His job. We don't do that.

And much of Christianity that calls itself evangelical doesn't read its Bible and doesn't understand what our job is. What does Romans 12, 1 and 2, I quoted it for you last week, I'll quote it again tonight. What does Romans 12, 1 and 2 say that our job is? What does Paul say to the Romans? He says, I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

This is your service. This is your reasonable service. It's reasonable.

I can't speak for everybody else. I can't tackle them and try to make them into something. I have my hands full with myself.

I'm accountable and responsible for myself and so are you. So the Bible says, you present yourself a living sacrifice to God. This is reasonable.

It's acceptable. And you should be holy. Don't be conformed to the world, the next verse says.

Don't just be like anybody can be a sheep. Anybody can follow along in the trail. Anybody can follow the trends.

Anybody can have the style. Anybody can go down and buy whatever clothes they're selling and whatever look they're selling. Anybody can do that.

It takes no brains. It takes no talent. It takes no initiative.

It takes no imagination. If you want to be something truly individual and you want to be something truly special, try Romans 12, 1 and 2. Don't be conformed to the world. Be transformed.

Look ahead. Are you interested in space travel? Are you interested in things that go beyond this planet and beyond this life and beyond this world? Prepare yourself for when Jesus comes back

and we have access to those realms in this body. Walk through walls.

Defy the laws of physics. Partake of things that are beyond our imagination. But we have to be getting ready now.

God says be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And that's what we do when we study Scripture. It lifts us out of the trenches, out of the usual, out of the mundane and teaches us things that partake of wider and grander and greater things.

People who deny the witness of God's Holy Spirit, when He comes and says, look, there's a God. And not only is there a God, but He is an active and watching God. And He has a standard that you have to meet and you can't meet it on your own.

You can't please God. You need to accept the gift of God so that you can be pleasing. Well, that's an easy thing.

All you have to do is say, I understand that I am corrupt. There's nothing I can do about it in my own strength, but I am willing to accept the work of God on my behalf through Jesus Christ. Now, what I have just described for you is unique to Christianity.

Name another world religion. Go around and find somebody. Find a holy man up on a mountain somewhere who can solve the human corruption problem, who can fix the corrupt soul, the depravity and the selfishness and the self-centeredness, the greed and the avarice, the messed up and broken human soul.

What religion can fix that? Religions try to do it. We saw the Hindus try to do it through knowledge. The Gnostics try to do it through knowledge.

The Unitarians try to do it through knowledge. And what happens? They always fail. And they always end up with, at best, some sort of earthly improvement.

Well, look, now, instead of going around committing crimes, I just sit here and meditate on the Vedic hymns or something. What about eternity? What about after death? What about the fact that there is a God in heaven? And one thing you can be sure of, no matter who you're talking to, they know, just like you know, in your heart of hearts, that there's a God because God the Holy Spirit has come and spoken that truth. And He has said, Here I am.

There is a God in heaven who has a righteous standard. And you have to meet it or you're not going to live eternally. You're going to have a miserable life and it's going to end in even greater misery.

You've got to simply accept the solution that only God can create and only God can offer. And it's in Jesus Christ. That's unique to Christianity.

So, I don't want to lose sight of that as we look at all of these other religions because that is the core. Orthodox Christianity, the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is unique.

There is none other name under heaven given among men. There's no name you can name that can save you, that can give you the power to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Nothing, except the Lord Jesus Christ.

And everyone in their heart of hearts knows it. I don't care what people call themselves. Atheist, agnostic.

Oh no, I'm a Scientologist. I'm a L. Ron Hubbard Dianetics. I'm this, I'm that, I'm the other.

I'm a Universalist Unitarianist. I'm a wacky grasshopper loving reincarnationist from Japan. My grandma is a cricket living in my cupboard.

It doesn't matter what they believe. Everybody, deep down in their heart of hearts, has been approached by God the Holy Spirit and they know that God exists. And they had to make a decision at the point that God the Holy Spirit came and made that truth available.

And so did you. Each one of you has faced that truth, has faced that witness from God the Holy Spirit and you have made a decision, one way or the other. And that decision determines our eternal fate.

It either opens up the treasury of God's grace and gives us the chance to live a life of meaning and purpose and great contentment and happiness or it shuts all that off and leaves us with the same sort of nonsense and the same sort of ignorance and the same sort of depravity and broken heartedness that all the rest of the world religions are stuck with. And you just, like Shakespeare says, you spend your life strutting and fretting your hour on the stage shaking your fist in the air sound and fury and at the end when you die it's all for nothing and it's all meaningless. So we have a great opportunity and it's a wonderful thing to be a Christian and to know that the truth of the word of God is the truth.

Jesus Christ is the truth. The way and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Him.

You can't get to the Father through Allah. You can't get to the Father through Buddha. You can't get to the Father through the nonsense that the world tries to pass off as religion.

Man cannot work himself up to God ship or to God. And the perversions and the corruptions that Satan has tried to make to deflect people away from that are numerous. As I said last time if you think of a 360 degree circle there are 359 ways to be wrong and there's only one way to be right.

And the little song that we learn as children one way God said to get to heaven the little visual is a one way sign there's only one way. Jesus is the only way. And you can be thankful that you have heard and have received that truth.

And because of that you have discernment and you have the ability to perceive the flaws and the deceptions that are rife in these other religions and the cults that we're looking at. We

started last time looking at the Jehovah's Witnesses Charles Taze Russell and Jesus is coming back in 1914 and all that. We're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back we're going to finish up looking at the Jehovah's Witnesses. And the next time two little guys come riding up on a bicycle you'll know exactly what they're going to say before they say it. So let's pause here and take our break.