

## **FINDING JESUS: Tim Keller**

### **[00:00:00.000] - Speaker 2**

The reading this morning is from John's Gospel, Chapter 5, verses 31 to 47.

<sup>31</sup>If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. <sup>32</sup>There's another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is true. <sup>33</sup>You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. <sup>34</sup>Not that I accept human testimony, but I mention it that you may be saved. <sup>35</sup>John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish, the very works I am doing, testify that the Father has sent me. <sup>36</sup>And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. <sup>37</sup>You have never heard his voice, nor seen his form, <sup>38</sup>nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. <sup>39</sup>You study the scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very scriptures that testify about me. <sup>40</sup>Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. <sup>41</sup>I do not accept glory from human beings, <sup>42</sup>but I know you.

### **[00:01:33.160] - Speaker 2**

I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. <sup>43</sup>I have come in my Father's name and you do not accept me. But if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. <sup>44</sup>How can you believe since you accept glory from one another, but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? <sup>45</sup>But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. <sup>46</sup>If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. <sup>47</sup>But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?

### **[00:02:28.500] - Speaker 1**

The passage, on which the sermon is based, John 5 is about the Bible. We've been talking about our faith in public. This is the last week in that series. Next week we begin advent, which is, by the way, an awfully interesting time and good time to invite people, perhaps, to come if you have been talking to somebody and they have been showing interest. But when you talk to people about faith in public, right away the Bible comes up. And very often people say, "Think, first of all, the Bible today," they'd say, "The Bible is a very nice book filled with good things. But in the end it's a human book. It's a human book written by human beings. There's contradictions in it. There's things in it we can't trust anymore. So, the Bible has to be filtered. There's some things we can follow, some things we can't because it's a human book." What I'd like to show you is what Jesus Christ's own view of the Scripture is, and then we'll apply that. John 5, starts with Jesus healing a man, a lame man. And then when the crowd gathers, he begins to teach them about himself.

### **[00:03:38.700] - Speaker 1**

And he makes some amazing claims. He claims to be the judge of the earth. He claims to be the giver of life. And these claims are pretty astounding. So astounding, some of the people are very angry at him. Verse 18 of Chapter 5 says they recognize that he was making himself equal with God. And so, they challenge him, "Why should we believe you?" That is the context for this verse, which on the surface looks a little bit surprising. Verse 31 says, "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true." Now, on the surface, it looks like what he's saying is you don't have to believe what I'm saying. It's not true. But what he actually is saying is this, in the context of Jewish jurisprudence, if a claim was made, you had to have two or three corroborating witnesses. You had two or three corroborating pieces of testimony. And so, what Jesus is saying here is he's saying, "Okay, I understand that my testimony wouldn't be valid if I'm the only one, my claims, right here, if that's the only testimony you had." But he says, "I got three more." Then he lists them.

### **[00:04:43.540] - Speaker 1**

First, he lists John the Baptist, who was a very respected prophet. Secondly, he lists his own works. He says in verse 36, I have testimony weightier than that of John for the works that the Father has given me to finish, the very works I am doing testify that the Father has sent me. He says, "Look at my miracles, and eventually look at my death and my resurrection, the works that I'm supposed to finish. Don't just listen to what John said. Don't just even listen to my words. Look at my deeds. Look at what I've done. Look what I am doing." But then thirdly, he actually says, "And the Father testifies." Through what? Verse 39, 40, The scriptures testify of me. That's the third witness. Now, in this context, he would have been talking about the Old Testament, what we would call the Old Testament. But notice for us, where do you get the testimony of John the Baptist today? Where do you get a chance to look at the works of Jesus Christ, the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. It's in what we call the New Testament. In other words, of the three witnesses, every one of them Jesus gives us here is in the Scripture.

### **[00:05:59.080] - Speaker 1**

And in the process of looking at what he says here, we learn three things that Jesus himself believed about the Scripture, which I think are very relevant to those of us who are trying to talk to people about the Bible. Jesus believes in the complete authority, unity, and vitality, power of the Bible. The authority, the unity, and the vitality. Look at these three points with me. First of all, he believes in the absolute, complete divine authority of the Bible. Now, to get that, you could go to almost any page of the New Testament. But look what he says here. He says in verse 37, The Father has testified concerning me. Where? He says, "You study the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. They are the scriptures that testify about me." Now, when Jesus here evidently is calling the Old Testament God's testimony, he's really just going along with everything else he has said. Jesus' view of the Bible is extraordinarily important for Christians. Let me just lay out what his view was for a minute. It's actually too weak to talk about Jesus' view. A view is an intellectual stance, but for example, Jesus said in John 10, the Scripture cannot be broken, can't be disregarded.

### **[00:07:22.120] - Speaker 1**

In Matthew 5, 18, he talks about not a jot or a tittle of the Word of God passing away to all is fulfilled. Now, a jot and a tittle was basically the smallest Hebrew letter and a part of a Hebrew letter. It would be like us saying, I don't just believe that the general ideas of the Bible are inspired. The cross on every T and the dot on every I is inspired by God and will not pass away to all is fulfilled. Sometimes Jesus' view of the Scripture goes by quickly. In Matthew Chapter 19, when Jesus is talking about marriage, he quotes Genesis 2, Old Testament, Genesis 2, where it says, A man shall leave his father and cleave to his wife. And Jesus in Matthew 19 says, God said that. God said, A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. But if you go back into Genesis 2, you'll see that it's the narrator. It's the author of Genesis that says that. And that means that Jesus says, Jesus believes that whatever a biblical author says, God says. Which means you can throw your red-letter Bible away.

### **[00:08:41.140] - Speaker 1**

See, the red-letter Bible implies, well, this is Jesus words, or these are God's words. But then the rest of it is just Paul's words and David's words and those people. But this is Jesus words, and Jesus himself doesn't look at the Bible like that at all. But see, for even Jesus to say, every, every single thing that any biblical author writes is God's word, every jot, every tittle, that's still a view. If you want to understand how Jesus really regarded the Bible in his actual life, every time Satan assaulted him in the wilderness, what's Jesus say? **Graphó ty**. That word was right on your lips, wasn't it? The Greek word, it is written. Every time Satan assaults him, what does Jesus do? Gets out the Scripture. It is written, quotes Scripture. When Peter gets out a sword to defend Jesus when he's being arrested, what does Jesus say? He says, Put up your sword. Don't you know I could call 12 legions of angels, but then how would this Scripture be fulfilled? It just amazes me that here's people running around with swords and staves. There's a riot going on and Jesus is thinking of the Scripture.

### **[00:10:03.450] - Speaker 1**

He's on his way to the cross. He's already been tortured and he's carrying the cross and he's literally dying. You remember on the way to the cross, on the way to Calvary, he meets some women who are weeping. And this is in Luke 23. And he says, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, weep for yourselves for the Prophet has said..." And then he quotes Isaiah. He quotes Isaiah. And then, of course, when he actually gets to the cross, Matthew 27, 45, we talk about it all the time. "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" It's a very famous spot in the Bible where Jesus is at the moment of his greatest need. He says, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" He was quoting the Scripture. He was quoting Psalm 22, verse 1. He obviously had the whole Psalm in his mind. Somebody years ago, I can't remember who said, if you stabbed Jesus Christ, he bleeds the Bible. It was the very operating principle of his life. At every turn he was thinking of the Scripture. At every time there was a test, every time there was a temptation, every time there was darkness in his life, how did he handle it?

### **[00:11:09.120] - Speaker 1**

He handled it through the Scripture. He didn't just believe in the full... He did believe in the full divine, plenary, inspiration, and authority of the Bible. He believed that everything the Bible said, God said. Did he believe that? Yeah. But beyond that, it was the operating principle of his life. Now, having said that, what do you say when someone says, "Well, you know, you Christians, it's okay to be a Christian, but you really can't take the Bible literally." And I've actually heard Christians who say, or at least professing Christians who said, "Well, I'm a Christian, but I don't take every part of the Bible literally. Some parts of it we just can't follow anymore." Now, A, every thoughtful Christian that hears somebody talk about taking the Bible literally has to wince. And the reason you have to wince is because at one level, no, you don't take the Bible literally, exactly. I mean, the point is, if the Bible has poetry in it where it says God was wrestling with the sea monster, and it's obviously poetry, there it's Hebrew poetry, it's all laid out that way, you read it as the author wants you to read it.

### **[00:12:18.450] - Speaker 1**

If the author is a poet and is trying to make his point through poetry, then you read it as a poem and you don't necessarily take it literally. Over here you have Luke. Luke says, "O Theophilus, I'm going to write you an account, an orderly account, which is a historical account based on eyewitness testimony of what happened in the life of Jesus." And when Luke says Jesus Christ rose on the third day, it's obvious that Luke wants us to believe he's telling us about something that literally happened. There's a certain sense in which do you take the Bible literally? Well, it depends on what the author is trying to say. As soon as you try to... We live in a sound bite culture, and as soon as you start to explain that, everybody's eyes glaze over. I think probably a better answer to the question, can you be a Christian and not take all the Bible literally? Usually what that means is I can be a Christian, but I don't have to follow every part of the Bible. The answer to that is no. There's a nice sound bite for you. Two letters. No, why?

### **[00:13:18.790] - Speaker 1**

How could you possibly say you can follow Jesus and then reject one of the main operating principles of his life? One of the main things he lived and died for? That is the height of disingenuousness. Without a belief in the full authority of the Bible, you aren't following Jesus. You're following somebody that you're calling Jesus. And it's more than that. Every indication is that if you say, "Well, I believe in God and I want to have a spiritual experience, but I don't want to have a fully authoritative Bible because there's some parts of it that we just can't follow anymore. There are some parts I don't like, some parts I don't accept." In the second season of the old TV Star Trek series, second season, this is way back, 1967 to 1969, there was a very funny, it was a comedic episode called I, Mudd. And it was about Harry Mudd, who was a space scoundrel who decided to go to a planet and create a paradise for himself by creating a whole planet filled with androids. So, he built all these androids. Now, the majority of the androids looked like beautiful women. But he made one android to look just like his wife that he had left, of course.

### **[00:14:45.690] - Speaker 1**

And his wife was a scold. So, every other android on the planet, no matter what he said to them, always said, Yes, Lord Mudd. Harry Mudd, M U D D. That was the name. The name of the episode was I, Mudd. And everybody on the whole planet never contradicted him. They always said, "Yes, Lord Mudd. Yes, Lord, Mudd. Yes, Lord, Mudd." Except his wife robot, he would turn her on and she would start to scold him and she would say, "Harcourt, Fenton, Mudd is that alcohol I smell on your breath? Where have you been?" And then what he would do is he would just push the off button. He'd say, "Where have you? You, you, you, you..." But he captures Captain Kirk and his starship enterprise, and he beams them down. And you know what? The plot is, I mean, it was a comedy. It was terrible production values, but it was a brilliant idea for the plot. He captured them because he was miserable. Why? He thought he had made himself a paradise in which nobody could contradict him. Nobody could talk back to him. Nobody could say anything that he didn't like. And then he realized he had no personal relationships at all.

### **[00:16:01.590] - Speaker 1**

And he was dying. He was dying. He was miserable. Because if you actually have nobody, you have nobody to argue with you, to push back, to make you do things you don't want to do, to tell you things you don't want to hear, you don't have a personal relationship. They're just all androids. So, he had to capture some people so he actually wouldn't go crazy. If you have a Bible that can only say back to you, "Yes, Lord Mudd," because you've taken it all out. When God says, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the world? Where were you? You, you, you, you..." Because you've taken it all out. Anything in there that you think is regressive, anything that you think we can't believe anymore. History has moved on. This is on the wrong side of history. Okay, it's a free country. You can do it. But you don't have a God who's a personal God now. You don't have the real Jesus and you don't have a personal God who can talk back to you, who can tell you things you don't want to hear, who can actually wrestle with you. The power of the Scripture is not abstract.

### **[00:17:15.690] - Speaker 1**

It's in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 5. It's an interesting spot where the Hebrew writer is quoting, and by the way, an Old Testament text, and he says, "Have you forgotten the exhortation that argues with you as his children?" Then he quotes Scripture. That's literally usually the translation goes, "Have you forgotten the scripture that exhorts you?" But it's a word that means argues with you. And I remember how helpful it was to me when I realized that one of the ways the Scripture helps me was it argues with me. You know that place where it says, "If God condemned you..." Pardon me, "If your hearts condemn you, God is greater than your heart." Your heart says you're nothing. God, God comes in from the Scripture and says, "No, I love you." See, we want God to contradict us there. But if you don't want God to contradict you over here, where it tells you something you don't want to believe, how are you going to let God contradict you over here when he tells you, I love you in spite of what your heart says. If you want a real God, if you want a real Jesus, you've got to have an authoritative Scripture.

### **[00:18:22.980] - Speaker 1**

You have to have an authoritative Scripture. Second and third, more briefly, actually. Jesus also is teaching here the unity of the Scripture. Many people say, "Well, the Bible is a human book and you can see. Look at all the contradictions. You Christians, you pick and choose. What about all these rules down here where it says you shouldn't be wearing linen and wool together, or you shouldn't be eating this, or you should be offering these sacrifices. You pick and choose to. Nobody follows everything in the Bible. It's filled with contradictions." Jesus says, "Moses wrote of me." See that? It's a remarkable statement. Verse 46, "If you believe Moses, you would believe me for he wrote about me." All the stuff in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy attributed to Moses. Surely that's what Jesus is thinking about. Moses wrote of me. He's looking at those passages that today we tend to say, "Oh, boy, that's strange. All that stuff about diet and what you can eat and all that thing." He's looking at all that and he says, "Do you realize that all those books are about me?" Now, unless you understand what he's saying here, the Bible will be a tangled thicket of what looks like contradictions.

#### **[00:19:47.110] - Speaker 1**

But if you take what he says, it really makes sense. "Why?" You say, "Well, where did Moses write it me?" Scholars have often said, "This doesn't make sense," because if you start to look through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy for some specific place where it talks about Jesus, no. But what if you take what Jesus obviously meant, because we know this from what he says to them after his resurrection, what if he says, "You need to read all of Moses' about me?" "John 1, John the Baptist sees Jesus and gets it. And he says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." What's the Lamb? The Lamb was slain at Passover when God was bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt. And so, they slew the Lamb and they put the Lamb's blood on the doorpost. And the angel of death passed over. And then every year, the Passover, they slay a lamb. And it represents the fact that somehow God is not making his people pay for their sins. And somehow there's some atonement being made, and suddenly John the Baptist gets it, "Hey, Moses' Passover is really about Jesus.

#### **[00:21:03.240] - Speaker 1**

He's the lamb. He's the one who's going to take away the sins of the world." You get near the end of John 1, and Jesus looks at Nathaniel and says, "You're going to see angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man." What? In the first book of Moses, Genesis, there's a passage where Jacob has a dream and he sees a stairway, and on it, angels are ascending and descending. And he realizes that somehow this is a prediction that God is going to open a passageway between heaven and earth, because the angels represent the presence of God. And there will be a way for us to get the presence of God in our lives. It will be a way for us to somehow reunite with God that we are right now estranged from. That's great, you might say, concrete slab between heaven and earth is going to be broken through. There's going to be a stairway. There's going to be a way for us to relate to God. And Jesus has the audacity to say to Nathaniel, "That stairway was actually about me. I'm the Axis Mundi. I'm the one who's going to unite heaven and earth.

#### **[00:22:10.570] - Speaker 1**

It's because of me and because of what I'm going to do." Then you move into Chapter 2, the wedding feast. Remember? And they ran out of wine. And Jesus says, "Look at those jars over there," which were jars that had water in them for ceremony or washing. Why? Because the Mosaic Law said you have to be clean to come into the presence of God. And Jesus fills those ceremonial jars with his wine. Indication is what is he saying? "I'm the one, my blood is going to purify you. Moses wrote of me. All the ceremonial stuff was about me in Moses. That stairway was about me. The Passover lamb was about me." Then you get to the end of chapter 2, and Jesus is cleansing the temple, throwing people out of the temple. And then what happens? They say, "What right have you got to do this?" And he says, "Tear this temple down in three days and I'll build it back up." But he was talking about his resurrection. He was talking about himself. And you know what he's saying? "I'm the temple. I'm the place where God and humanity are going to meet again over the atoning sacrifice."

### **[00:23:20.090] - Speaker 1**

And then I could keep this up. John 3, Jesus is trying to talk to Nicodemus, and he says, "As Moses raised up the bronze serpent in the wilderness so that people who looked at it were saved, so I will be lifted up." You don't have to go looking through Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus as Numbers did around me to try to find some messianic prophecy. Jesus says it's all about me. It's all about me. The Bible will be a thicket. It'll look like contradiction. But if you understand it's all pointing to me, then suddenly it becomes this incredible unity. There's no contradictions in it. And that leads lastly to the fact of its vitality. And what do I mean by vitality? Look at this interesting place where Jesus seems to be telling them that they're both right and wrong about the Bible. Verse 39 and 40, You study the scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. Now, look carefully. Are they right and are they wrong about how they handle scripture? Both.

### **[00:24:32.390] - Speaker 1**

First of all, they're wrong because he says you study the scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. But they testify about me and you won't believe in me and therefore you refuse to come to me to have life. Here's what he's doing. They're both right and they're wrong. Eternal life is in the scripture and yet the message of the scripture is that through Jesus Christ you get eternal life. So, here's what these folks were doing. They didn't believe in Jesus but they thought they could still get eternal life through the scripture. What did that mean? Probably it meant that they believed that by just knowing the Scripture and by obeying the scripture, they were very diligent. They would have been studying it day in and day out, hours a day. They would have memorized it. And they did. They worked out everything the Bible said into 700, 800, 900, 1,000 different laws. They did everything they could to be compliant with it. They tried and they tried and they tried. Now, here's the point. The Bible is a divine book. Not a jot or tittle will pass away unless it's all fulfilled.

### **[00:25:52.040] - Speaker 1**

It's all God's book. Yet it's possible to believe that and yet to miss the main message, which is you're not saved by obeying the Bible, but you're saved by the one to whom everything in the Bible points and what he has done. So, if you actually see the Bible and have a high view of its authority and miss its point and fall into believing that through my study of it and through my obedience to it, I will be saved. The Bible is just a book to you. It's just a book. I sometimes mention how Mark Twain, who rejected Christianity, used to have this nightmare about being asleep and waking up and finding this huge Bible on him, bigger than him, weighing him down, crushing him and suffocating him. What a vivid metaphor that is. But you see, frankly, the Bible, unless you see it's about Jesus, unless you see it's all about Jesus, it will destroy you. It will either destroy you by giving you such guilt over the fact you can't live up to it that you'll just abandon Christianity, or it'll turn you into a pharisee, who only care about praise from others, not really from God, who are basically saving themselves by actually having their self-esteem rise as they think of themselves as biblically knowledgeable and obedient, rather than obeying the Bible out of love for God because they realize that they're saved by grace.

### **[00:27:26.030] - Speaker 1**

Look, let me finish like this. If you are not sure what you believe in, or whether you believe in Christianity, then you ought to look at what Jesus offers. Jesus says, look at personal, empirical, and scriptural testimony. Personal testimony, he says, look at John the Baptist. You say, "Well, I don't know John the Baptist." No. But you're never probably going to find faith unless you have some Christians that you admire and respect. That's the personal. Secondly, look at Jesus' actual life. That's the empirical. Look at his resurrection. Look at what he actually did. Study the New Testament documents. But then thirdly, the Scripture itself. If you don't use the Bible as an end, but a means to an end of finding Christ, if you learn how to stand back and not look so much at everything the Bible says only the details, but how the Bible is pointing also to the Lord, then it becomes something that gives life. Close like this: If I sent a scientist friend of mine to the top of a mountain, I said, I want you to get up there and just see what you can see. And if the person comes back down and says, "Well, I took some soil samples to try to figure out the consistency of the soil, and I took some samples of the bark of the trees up there.

### **[00:28:45.800] - Speaker 1**

And I checked out the visibility. It looked to me like there was 40 % humidity and it was a visibility of 3.2 miles. But my guess is that you could probably, from up there, see 10.2 miles if the humidity was below." And I said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. You've missed the point. When I go up there, the view is astounding. It restores my soul. That's what I wanted you to see. I didn't want you to miss the forest for the trees. I didn't want you to miss the view for the soil samples." It's really quite important that you learn how to look at who Jesus is because that will give you life. And even if you say, "Well, I've got eternal life, I'm a Christian." Every single day, Psalm 1 talks about drawing life, life by meditating on the Word of God day and night. You're like a tree planted by water, drawing life from it. Do you know how to do that? The way to do it is to realize Moses wrote of me. The scriptures, testify to me. Everything we know about the authority of the Bible, the unity of the Bible, and the powerful vitality of the Bible rests on understanding Jesus Christ as the Lord of the Word.

**[00:30:00.000] - Speaker 1**

Do you know how to do that? God gave you the grace to understand these things and live by them. Let's pray.

Our Father, we ask that you would help us to see why in the Word of the Lord, we find the Lord of the Word. It's because of the Lord of the Word that we can believe in the Word of the Lord. We ask that you would enable us now as a church to be people who know how to not only not only give a good answer when people criticize the authority of the Word, but to show that the Bible to us is not just a body of truth that we defend, but really it's our food, it's our drink, and it's our way of knowing you. Lord, we pray that you would help us to love you through your Word, and we pray that you would make your Word alive in our lives. We don't want to be like the people Jesus was talking about, that your word doesn't dwell on us. We want your word to dwell on us richly. And we pray that you would help us in that regard. Now, through your Holy Spirit, for we ask it through Jesus, in his name we pray, Amen.