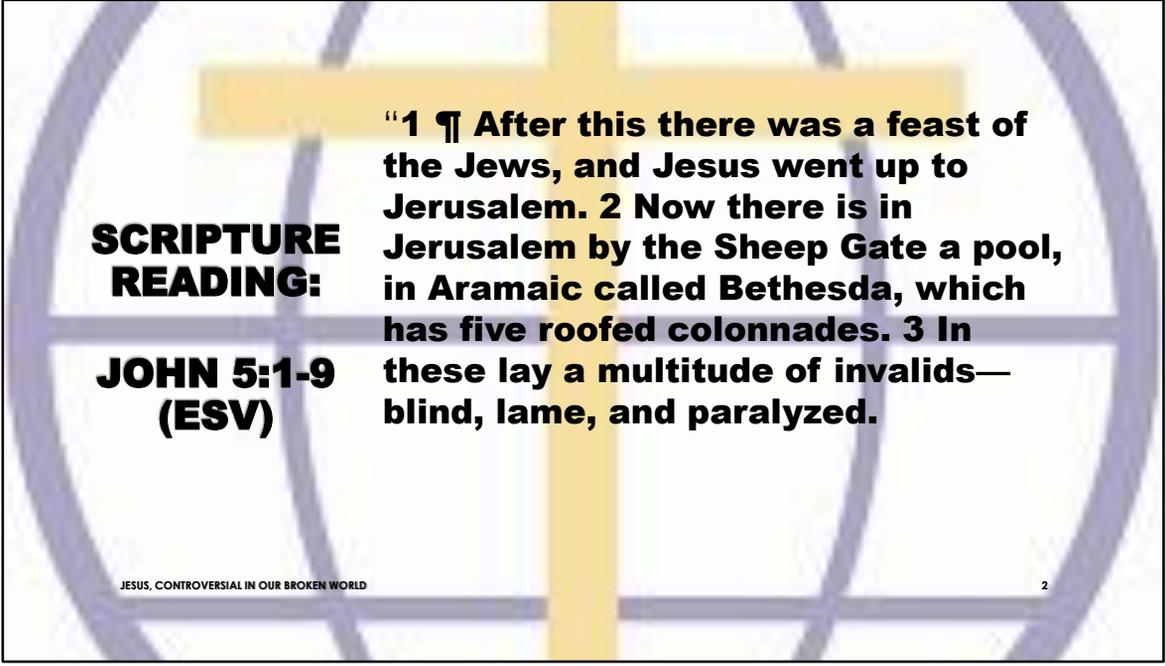




JESUS, CONTROVERSIAL IN OUR BROKEN WORLD

**Grace Communion International
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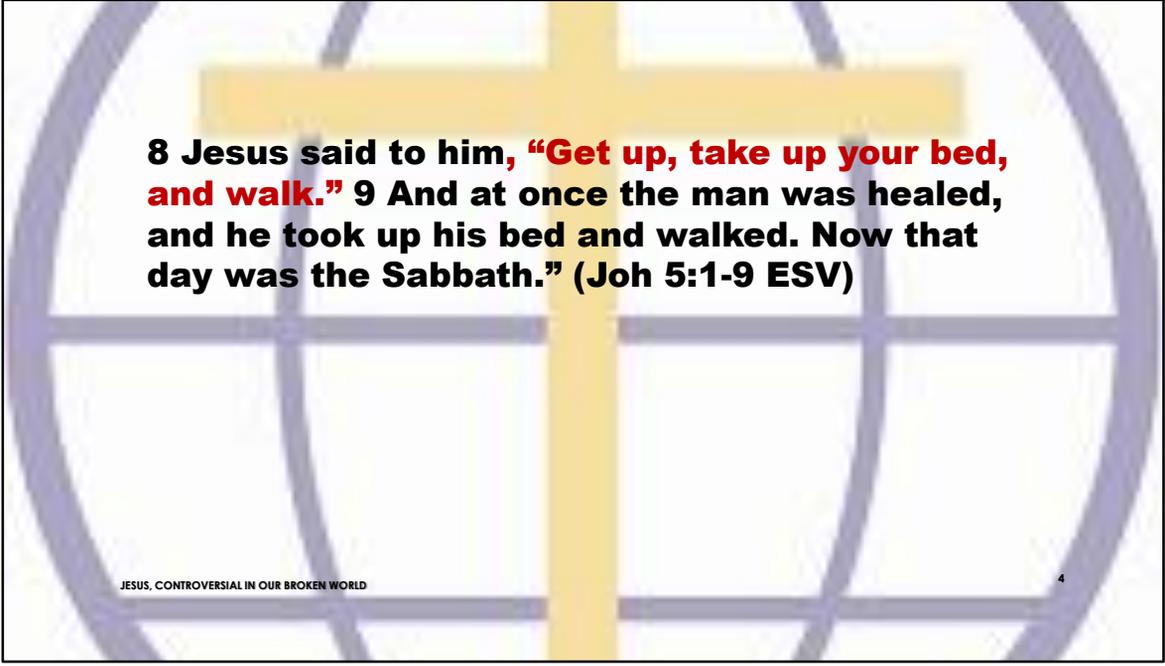


**SCRIPTURE
READING:**

**JOHN 5:1-9
(ESV)**

“1 ¶ After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed.

- **4 5 ONE MAN WAS THERE WHO HAD BEEN AN INVALID FOR THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS. 6 WHEN JESUS SAW HIM LYING THERE AND KNEW THAT HE HAD ALREADY BEEN THERE A LONG TIME, HE SAID TO HIM, “DO YOU WANT TO BE HEALED?” 7 THE SICK MAN ANSWERED HIM, “SIR, I HAVE NO ONE TO PUT ME INTO THE POOL WHEN THE WATER IS STIRRED UP, AND WHILE I AM GOING ANOTHER STEPS DOWN BEFORE ME.”**



8 Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.” (Joh 5:1-9 ESV)



**THESE ARE THE INSPIRED WORD OF THE
LIVING GOD**

**THANK YOU FOR MAKING YOUR WORD OF
LIFE AVAILABLE TO US**

AMEN

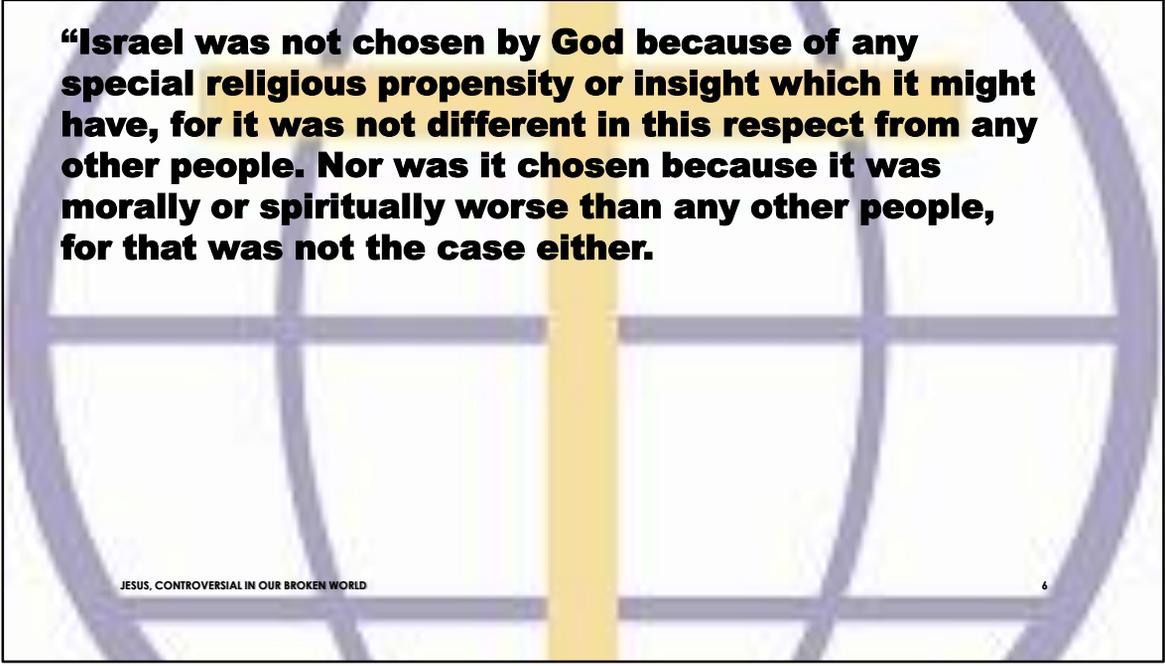
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During today's sermon, we are going to consider how Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, is such a controversial figure as he intervenes in our world and in our life.

Jesus became incarnate in our flesh as a Jew. God has been involved with Israel since he liberated them from the oppression of the Egyptians. Israel was and is a descendent of Abraham, whom God calls the father of the faithful. The Jews are one of the tribes of Israel. Israel is the only nation on earth who was specifically chosen by God to prepare for the way of the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

When God made a covenant to partner with Israel, a running conflict between divine revelation and the carnal mind began to be evident. (Quote from Thomas Torrance **THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST (page 10)**)



“Israel was not chosen by God because of any special religious propensity or insight which it might have, for it was not different in this respect from any other people. Nor was it chosen because it was morally or spiritually worse than any other people, for that was not the case either.



However, within the covenant relationship in which God drew near to Israel and Israel was drawn near to God in an unprecedentedly intimate way, the innate resistance of the human soul and mind resulting from the alienation of man from God inevitably became intensified, so that again and again the rebellion of Israel against God appears to have been in inverse proportion to the favour of God lavished on it. ' (The Mediation of Christ by Thomas F. Torrance P. 10)

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7

The human mind has not changed. Apart from God, the human mind is hostile to God. The apostle Paul says it this way, **“For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.” (Ro 8:7 ESV).**

The Israelites who were greatly oppressed under the Egyptians and in slavery wished for liberation. The book of Exodus tells us that during those many days, the king of Egypt died and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel and God knew. (Exodus 2:23-25)

One would think that they would have been happy and rejoicing with the news that God was going to intervene.

God first began to work with a reluctant Moses at first who would humanly lead them in their separation. When Moses met with the Pharaoh, he faced resistance from him. He would not let the Israelites go because they were his manpower in the building of his empire. He caused more problems for the Israelites by making their work more difficult. The struggles they face is very well described in the book of Exodus.

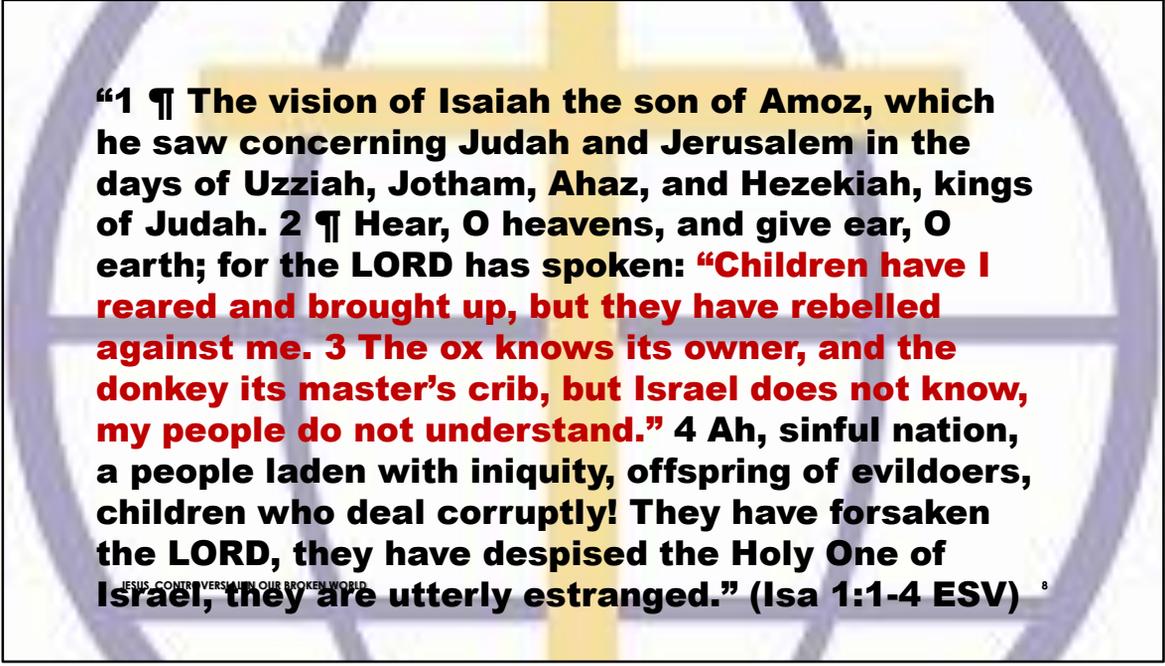
During their journey out of Egypt, when God sent powerful signs, there were times when they were elated and other times when they were complaining and groaning. For example, when they arrived at the Red Sea inside the Egyptian army following them, they thought, even after all the miraculous sign that God has made that he would let them die and be killed by this powerful army. It began to blame God and blame Moses.

After the crossing of the Red Sea, the Israelites became elated and praise God only to turn back to their idols when Moses went up on Mount Sinai. They said to themselves, **"Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."** (Exodus 32:1). They decided to make a golden calf which they did worship. God made many obvious miracles in liberating them from the Egyptians. One would think that they would have been so appreciative and thankful that they would want to be faithful to God for the rest of their lives. However, this was not so.

All the miracles of God did not change the hearts of the Israelites. Many of them had a complaining and groaning heart. As a result, all the males 20 and older could not enter the promised land. All of Israel suffered the consequences. The Bible tells us that there were 600,000 men on foot who cross the desert not counting the women, children, etc. (Exodus 12:37.) It is estimated that there were probably 2.5 million people involved. If they had obeyed God, they could have crossed the desert in about two months or so. Instead, it took them 40 years to reach the promised land.

As we read the Old Testament, we see God revealing himself to Israel and Israel, time after time rejecting him. Even their leadership became corrupt. In his mercy and commitment to Israel God worked through judges and later on through prophets to convey his will, grace and desire for them.

In Isaiah, this is what God said about Israel.



“1 ¶ The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. 2 ¶ Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: **“Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.” 4 Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.” (Isa 1:1-4 ESV)”**

God had a purpose for Israel. He began to reveal himself to them even in their opposition. God was preparing the way for the coming of Jesus. The Old Testament gives us a framework to understand the new covenant.

For example, we could not understand that Jesus is the Lamb of God apart from learning about the animal sacrifices offered to God. All these animal sacrifices were pointing to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. The Sabbath pointed to the fact that our rest is not in a day but in Jesus.

When Jesus came to the earth as the incarnate Son of God at the right time chosen by God the Father, 10 of the nations of Israel disappeared from view as they were assimilated among the nations of the world.

From before the foundation of the world, God decided in his love and wisdom that he would reconcile humanity to himself through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

We have much to be thankful for the Jewish nation as they always had a special relationship with God even if they did not recognize him. After all, God love them and

work through them to accomplish his very special purpose. From the Jews descended Jesus.

When Jesus came to Jerusalem, being God in the flesh, he immediately encountered opposition. He encountered opposition from his birth and he encountered opposition during all of his ministry.

John 5 is an example of the opposition Jesus had to face.



Nowadays, we take wheelchairs for granted. They are available everywhere for those who need them.

The most commercially successful chair is the lightweight folding chair, which American engineer Herbert Everest designed in the 1930s after he broke his back in a mining accident.

The first known image of a wheelchair was carved into a stone in the 6th century. King Philip II, who was the King of Spain during the 16th century, used a very elaborate wheelchair that had both armrests and leg rests.

Harry Jennings and his disabled friend Herbert Everest, both mechanical engineers, invented the first lightweight, steel, collapsible wheelchair in 1933. Everest had broken his back in a mining accident. (from quora.com)

Wheelchairs were not available during the time of Jesus.

One would think that the healing of this paralyzed man would have been a source of great joy. The Bible does not give us a whole lot of details about the condition of this man except that he had to lie on a bed. With others, his mobility was very limited. He could not get around on his own. He was completely dependent on others. He had

been in such a state for 38 years. He was probably in a state of hopelessness thinking that he would die with this physical condition.

It is interesting, as we read those verses in John 5 that when Jesus came to Jerusalem and went to the temple by the pool of Bethesda, he did not go there with fanfare. In fact, after he healed a man, Jesus simply disappeared not attracting attention to himself. The paralyzed man did not have any idea who Jesus was. It was only afterwards that Jesus walking in the synagogue met this man again.

When Jesus saw this man, he simply asked him, **"Do you want to be healed?"** This paralyzed man had no idea that Jesus was God's eternal Son incarnate in our flesh.

The paralyzed man did not answer directly because he did not know that Jesus could heal him without going to that pool. Consequently, the man respectfully answered, **"Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another step down before me."**

Maybe this man hoped that Jesus would volunteer to make sure that he got into the pool first. To his great surprise, Jesus simply told him, **"Get up, take up your bed, and walked."**

The man was instantly healed. The Bible does not tell us what he felt in his body to realize that he was healed. We only know that he knew that he was healed because he took up his bed and walked. The man obeyed Jesus and he took up his bed and went on his way.

In the Jewish religious mind, it was unlawful to carry a bed on the Sabbath. Again, rather than rejoice that this man could walk after having been an invalid for so long, they began to pick on him.

This formerly paralyzed man simply told them that the man who had healed him had also told him to carry his bed. When asked who this man was, the paralyzed man could not answer because he had never seen Jesus before.

Jesus found this man in the temple and told him, **"See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."** (Verse 14)

Afterwards, the man went away and told the Jews who it was that had healed him.

They then began to persecute Jesus because he had healed this man on the Sabbath.

When the inquired of Jesus, Jesus' answered fuelled their self-righteousness. He told

them, "**My Father is working until now and I am working.**" (Verse 17).

Not only, from their perspective was Jesus break the Sabbath, he also called God his Father, a term they had never heard before about God. He was thus making himself equal with God. **"This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God."** (Joh 5:18 ESV)

As we read these verses, we see that Jesus attracted persecution and opposition from the religious folks in the temple. We see that the man who was healed also aroused attention and some finger-pointing.

When God showed up in the nation of Israel, it revealed the human heart and how opposed it is to God.

When Jesus, God in the flesh, showed up, he was not well received either. **"10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him."** (Joh 1:10-11 ESV)

Even when he told the religious leaders who he was, they were so ingrained in their religious paradigms that they could not fit Jesus in their way of thinking. They were expecting some kind of powerful ruler who would liberate them from the oppression of the Roman Empire. Although the Old Testament pointed to Jesus, they were blind to it.

This is what Peter said after the day of Pentecost (next slide) Acts 3:17.

“14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. .. 17 “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.” (Ac 3:14-15, 17 ESV)

What can we learn from reading this passage of Scripture?

1 – **We read that this man was not seeking Jesus.** It was Jesus who sought him. This man had no faith in Jesus because in fact he did not know who Jesus was.

This man could not say that he was seeking God because he wasn't.

The same thing happens today. God stirs up people's minds and hearts to turn to him through the Holy Spirit. We also see that it is God who chooses. He could have chosen other people lying with this paralyzed broken man who were lying there with him in the temple.

We also see that because Jesus intervened in this man's life that his healing attracted criticism from religious people. I imagine he was quite surprised that people did not rejoice with him that he was not well.

The same thing happens when we are called by God to turn to him in repentance and faith. Some people in our surroundings may get upset because our lives are being transformed by God.

2— Not only does it upset certain people but many challenges in our own lives present themselves. When God calls us and we realize how great he is and how loving he is, we can have the attitude of a little child or a young child thinking that our lives will be now problem-free. As children grow up and become adults, they begin to realize that life has many challenges.

As God begins to change our hearts and our thinking, as the potter moulding our lives into the resemblance of Jesus, he refines us. He corrects us. As the potter puts up the heat to remove the blemishes from his work of art, there are times where God puts up the heat in our lives to get rid of the blemishes in our lives. God tells us that we are seated with him in the heavenly is in Christ. He gives to us his righteousness. The biblical word for giving us his righteousness is “impute”.

However, in the flesh, we still need work as we are being renewed day by day. **“16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. 17 For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” (2 Co 4:16-18 ESV).**

This renewal is sometimes a painful. **The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desire of the Spirit are against the flesh for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do,** Paul tells us in Galatians 5. We may have mental and spiritual struggles when we begin to realize that we are sinful, selfish, given to jealousy, are having anger problems, are envious of others, etc.

Bringing our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ is not always easy. In our human nature, we want to hold on to things when God tells us that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

It is a challenge to seek first the kingdom of God rather than the attractions of this world. We need to be reminded by God constantly where our priorities are to be.

Sometimes, because it hurts, instead of welcoming the work God is doing in our lives, we may fight against it. We may not understand the things we are going through and we may wonder why it is we are suffering. We forget that God, being our Father, disciplines us in his love. At those times, we may be tempted to look back at our past life and wonder what God has been doing all along. **“Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.’” (Lu 9:62 ESV).**

God is committed to us. We did not choose us but we participate in what he is doing in our life. We participate in what he’s doing not only in our life but in life of others. Paul

said of himself and his companions that they were fragrance to others. Being the temple of the Holy Spirit, we too are a fragrance to others. Some except the fragrance and some rejected.

“14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Co 2:14-16 ESV)

It is not easy especially when those who are very close to us reject the fragrance of God. We wish so much that they would understand but at this time they don't.

3- We have to watch out for spiritual blinders.

The Jews, both the common people in the religious people, had religious blinders that they were not even aware of. The same is true for us. When we pray to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus, we must be willing to put aside religious blinders when they are shown to us by the Holy Spirit as he guides and brings us to know the truth.

I realize that we are all at different stages of growth. Paul, in his letters to the Romans, writes about how mature Christians are to deal with the more immature and how the less immature are to deal and live with the more mature (Romans 14).

As we all know, Christians from different denominations have differences on secondary issues. Sometimes, we may even have her fear of going to pray with them. We have difficulties accepting other Christians because they may have different views on secondary matters.

Christians have different views about the days to keep, communion, the frequency of communion, etc.

The people in Jesus' day applied laws to the Sabbath apart from the inspired word of God using the **Mishnah**, which is an authoritative collection of exegetical material embodying the oral tradition of Jewish law and forming the first part of the Talmud. **The Talmud** is the central text of Rabbinic Judaism and the primary source of Jewish religious law and Jewish theology. Until the advent of modernity, in nearly all Jewish communities, the Talmud was the centerpiece of Jewish cultural life and was foundational to “all Jewish thought and aspirations”, serving also as “the guide for the daily life” of Jews. (From Wikipedia.)

In other words, often man-made laws trumped the inspired word of God.

In our modern world, we are not immune to this. We can read the Bible through the prism of sources which are outside the Bible. There is nothing wrong in looking at sources outside the Bible. We have much to learn from those sources. However, if they do not align with the truth found in Jesus and the inspired word, God and the inspired word obviously has precedence.

For example, early church history is excellent in so many ways. But if there are practices that are contrary to what the inspired word of God says in the New Testament, then we are to go by the word of God.

For example, many Christians read the book of Revelation and try to set dates when Jesus will return. Jesus tells us that no one knows the time or the hour.

Or again, we put our spin on second Thessalonians 4 and the book of Revelation and we come up with a definite theory about the rapture prior to the tribulation, a theory that cannot be proven from the biblical text. It's easier just to stay with what the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 4: 17 (**"Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."** [1 Thess. 4:17 ESV]). The text in first Thessalonians talks about the general resurrection and has nothing to do with the tribulation. We also forget that the book of Revelation was written for people at the time of John. It was written in a language that the people of that they understood and made sense to them.

Today is not the time to go into the details of these things. Our responsibility is simply to live in the Lord every day and when the time of the return of Jesus comes the Bible tells us there will be people who alive and the people who are dead are going to be changed and resurrected in a certain order. We are to read the Scriptures without making our projections doctrines.

We need to remember when we study scripture to always look at the who—Jesus—and not at the what or how first.

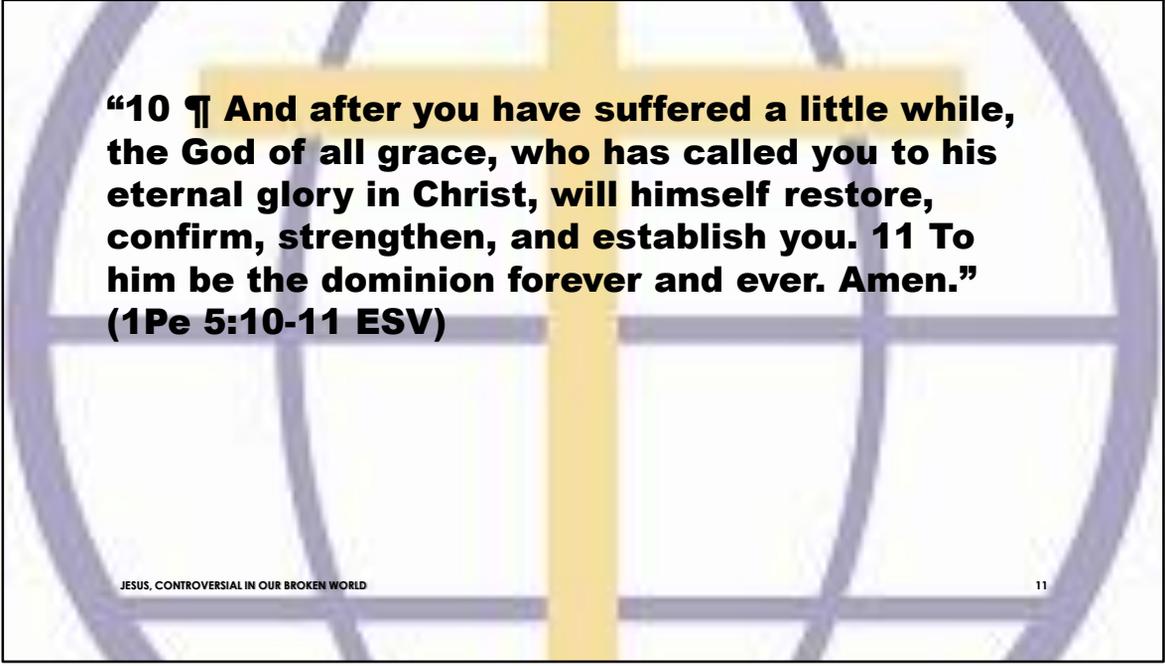
Jesus is God's last revelation because he is the second person in the Trinity who came down from heaven to earth..

We are to be ready to put aside our twist on things and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are to make an effort to understand things from how God reveals himself and not how we think he presents himself.

4- Belonging to God does not take away trials.

The apostle Peter tells us that we are to care all our anxieties on God because he cares for us. The apostle Peter told those exiled Christians who were living in various parts of

the Middle East and who were living very difficult lives about the confidence that they could have been God.



**“10 ¶ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”
(1Pe 5:10-11 ESV)**

As those first disciples of Jesus, we live in this world but we are not of this world. Jesus is controversial for those who do not know him but he is the source of great peace and hope for those who do!

What a blessing to be in relationship with him!

Let us pray