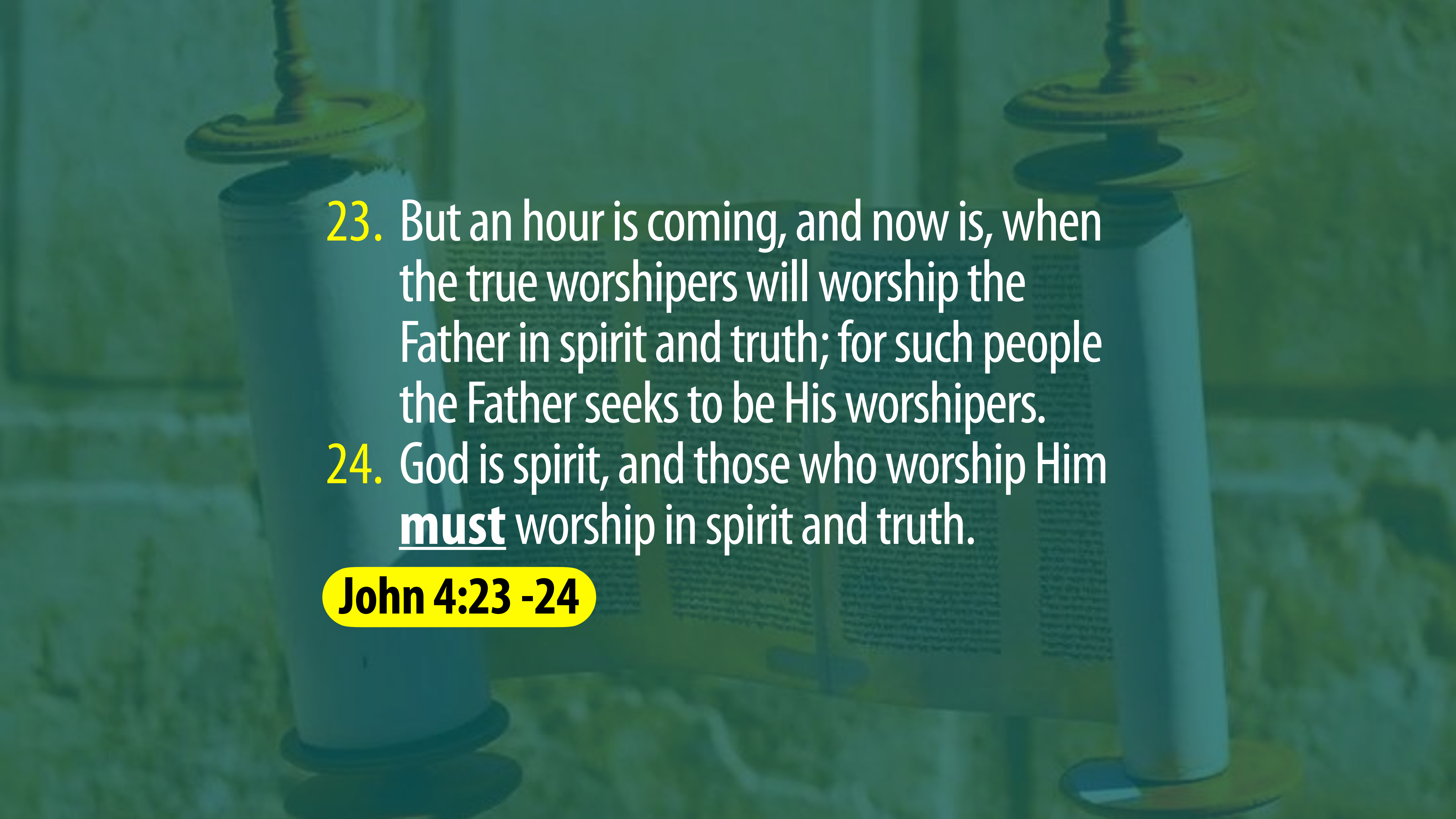


Truth, the Birth of Christ & an Anniversary

20th
ANNIVERSARY

1. Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are named Israel and who came forth from the loins of Judah, who swear by the name of the Lord and invoke the God of Israel, **but not in truth nor in righteousness.**
2. For they call themselves after the holy city and lean on the God of Israel; the Lord of hosts is His name.

Isaiah 48:1-2

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- The background of the slide features an open Bible with several lit candles. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the flames of the candles, which cast a warm, golden glow. The Bible is open to a page with visible text, and the candles are positioned around it, some in the foreground and some in the background, creating a sense of depth and atmosphere. The overall color palette is dominated by the teal and blue tones of the background, contrasted with the yellow and orange of the candle flames.
23. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.
24. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:23 -24

A person in a scuba suit is swimming in a large, colorful, abstract underwater environment. The scene is filled with vibrant, swirling colors like blue, green, yellow, and red, creating a dreamlike atmosphere. The person is positioned in the lower center, looking upwards. The background features a large, circular, metallic-looking structure, possibly part of a submarine or a large underwater vessel, with various pipes and equipment visible. The overall composition is dynamic and visually striking.

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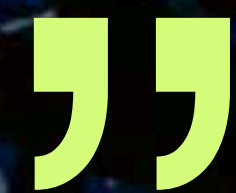
The test of whether Scripture is my authority is this: do I allow God's Word to convince me to believe what I don't like, what's contrary to what I've always believed or wanted to believe? Do I believe it even when it offends me? Am I willing to bow my knees before God and accept His truth even when my life would be easier, for the moment, if I didn't?

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- ▶ Scripture is the supreme & final authority in matters of faith & conduct.
- ▶ The Scriptures are the ultimate standard governing my beliefs & actions.
- ▶ The Bible is the definitive source of truth & authority in my life.

- Do I allow God's Word to convince me to believe what I don't like?
- Do I allow God's Word to convince me to believe what's contrary to what I've always believed or wanted to believe?
- Do I believe God's Word even when it offends me?
- Am I willing to bow my knees before God & accept His truth even when my life would be easier, for the moment, if I didn't?



truth is absolute

- ▶ means that truth is fixed, universal & independent of personal opinions, perceptions or circumstances. There is one reality that does not shift with viewpoints.
- ▶ because truth is the self-expression of God who is absolute. He is absolute in His nature. He is unchanging & perfect. He is independent of human perception, reasoning & understanding.
- ▶ because God is the source of all truth, morality & being.

What is God's attitude towards His children if we are simply ignorant about something or if we don't have a right understanding about some of the things of God?

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; **now I know in part**, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

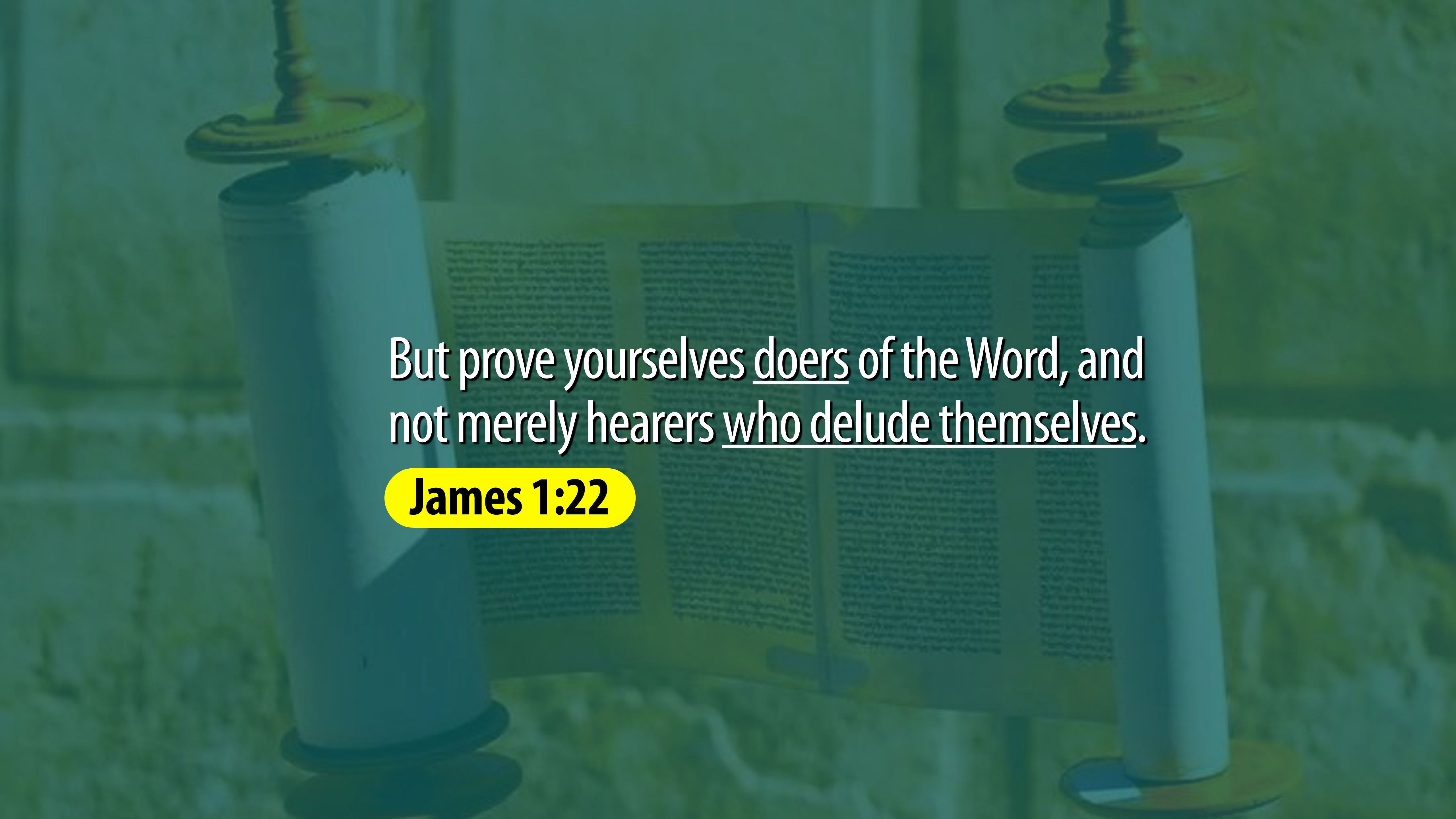
1 Corinthians 13:12

What is God's attitude towards His children if we are simply ignorant about something or if we don't have a right understanding about some of the things of God?

- ▶ God understands human limitations & does not condemn our ignorance. Instead, God responds with grace & offers opportunities for growth & learning where we need to learn or where our understanding needs to realign. He desires us to grow in the things of God.
- ▶ Being uninformed is different from wilfully rejecting truth. God judges the heart & intentions, not just knowledge.

How does God expect us to respond when we learn truth, when we come to understand things we had not understood previously or that we had an incorrect understanding of?

- ▶ The Bible consistently teaches that when we come to understand truth, especially if it corrects a previous misunderstanding, our response should involve humility, obedience & transformation.
- ▶ Scripture calls us firstly, to repent & turn from error & then secondly, to align our lives with the truth that has been revealed to us.
- ▶ We are expected by God to walk in revealed truth.

An open book is shown from a top-down perspective, lying flat. The pages are filled with text, though it is mostly illegible due to a semi-transparent teal overlay. The book is held open by two brass-colored clips on the left and right sides. The background is a light, textured surface.

But prove yourselves doers of the Word, and
not merely hearers who delude themselves.

James 1:22



HYPOCRISY


- saying one thing but doing or living another thing
- claiming to believe something but acting in a different manner

How does Scripture define hypocrisy?

- ▶ The Bible calls hypocrisy a sin.
- ▶ God's Word defines a hypocrite as someone who puts on a mask and pretends to be something he is not.
- ▶ Hypocrisy is to claim to know and follow certain beliefs but to behave in a way that counteracts those beliefs.
- ▶ Hypocrisy is insincerity – a false appearance of godliness without a genuine heart for God.

God hates hypocrisy

- ▶ Hypocrisy is hated by God because it distorts truth, misleads others, and dishonours Him.
- ▶ God Values Integrity and Truth. Proverbs 11:20 says: “The Lord detests those whose hearts are perverse, but He delights in those whose ways are blameless.” Hypocrisy is a form of perversity because it is pretence, not reality. God desires integrity and truth, not pretence. When our words and actions don't match, it dishonours Him.
- ▶ Jesus Condemned Hypocrisy Openly: In Matthew 23:27–28, Jesus calls the Pharisees “whitewashed tombs” - beautiful outside but full of dead bones inside.



The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.

The unsaved react to hypocrisy in the Church

- ▶ Hypocrisy confirms their doubts. When unbelievers see hypocrisy - professing faith but living contrary to it - it reinforces their belief that the Church is insincere or irrelevant.
- ▶ Hypocrisy becomes a barrier to the Gospel. Hypocrisy is often cited as a reason for not attending church or believing in Christ. People say things like: "Why should I follow Jesus if His followers don't?" This attitude can harden hearts against the message of the gospel.
- ▶ Hypocrisy amongst believers undermines the credibility & the truth of Christian life & ministry.

TRUTH is only founded in God & not in pagan religions or in pagan practises

Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 19:4

29. When the Lord your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land,
30. beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?'
31. You shall not behave thus toward the Lord your God, for every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.
32. Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.

Deuteronomy 12:29-32

What is founded in paganism & what is associated with pagan practises is offensive to God because ...

- ① paganism diverts worship & attention from the true God
- ① paganism produces worthless & false worship

It is very dangerous to make up gods & myths & attribute what God has done by His power to fictional beings who don't exist. God wants us to reject anything that diverts attention & worship from Him.



- ▶ Scripture doesn't give a date for the birth of Jesus
- ▶ God did not set a festival in place for the birth of Jesus
- ▶ Birthdays had virtually no significance in Hebrew culture because Hebrew culture focused on life milestones such as circumcision, coming of age & marriage rather than the date of someone's birth
- ▶ The first Church never celebrated the birth of Christ

**Only two birthdays are detailed in Scripture
& neither are portrayed in a positive light.**

- ▶ Genesis 40:20: Pharaoh's birthday
- ▶ Matthew 14:6 & Mark 6:21: Herod's birthday

No birthdays of godly people (like prophets or apostles) are celebrated in Scripture.

The two mentioned are associated with pagan rulers & negative outcomes.

26. While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.
27. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.
28. In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

Luke 2:26-28

Flocks were put out to the pasture in March & returned to pens in early November which would make the birth of Jesus well before December 25th.

Events in order (approx. dates):

- ▶ **May 19–26:** Zechariah's priestly service (Luke 1:5, 8-10)
- ▶ **Late May–Early June:** John's conception (Luke 1:13, 24 & 36)
- ▶ **Late November:** Jesus' conception six months after John (Luke 1:26 & 36)
- ▶ **March 10:** John's birth
- ▶ **Early September:** Jesus' birth

- ▶ Christmas, meaning coming of Christ, was first observed in 336 AD, 24 years after the Roman Emperor Constantine established Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire.
- ▶ Pope Julius I of the Roman Catholic Church designated December 25th as the date for celebrating Christ's birth throughout the Roman Empire.
- ▶ This was intended to unify Christian worship & also to set a specific day for the birth of Jesus that could be celebrated throughout the Roman Empire.
- ▶ The choice of December 25th coincided with the winter solstice season which already featured pagan Roman festivals like Saturnalia & Dies Solis Invicti Nati, a feast linked to sun worship.



The modern Christmas celebration combines many strands of tradition including the ancient Roman pagan festival of Saturnalia (merrymaking, exchange of presents), the old Germanic midwinter customs (Yule log, decorating evergreen trees), the tradition of Francis of Assisi (displaying the crib, or crèche of Jesus), the medieval feast of St. Nicholas (Sinterklaas in Dutch, hence “Santa Claus”), and the British sending of greeting cards (1840s). The Puritan pilgrims did not celebrate Christmas because of its many unbiblical associations.



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Many people today want to put Jesus back into Christmas, but the fact of the matter is that He was never in Christmas in the first place.

”

6. Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites, as it is written: These people honour Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.
7. They worship Me in vain; they teach as doctrine the precepts of men.
8. You have disregarded the commandment of God to keep the tradition of men.
9. He went on to say, You neatly set aside the command of God to maintain your own tradition.

Mark 7:6-9



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It's common knowledge that Christmas and its customs have nothing to do with the Bible. The theological question is quite simple: "Is it acceptable to God for humans to choose to worship Him by adopting paganism's most popular celebrations and calling them Christian?"

Clyde Kilough

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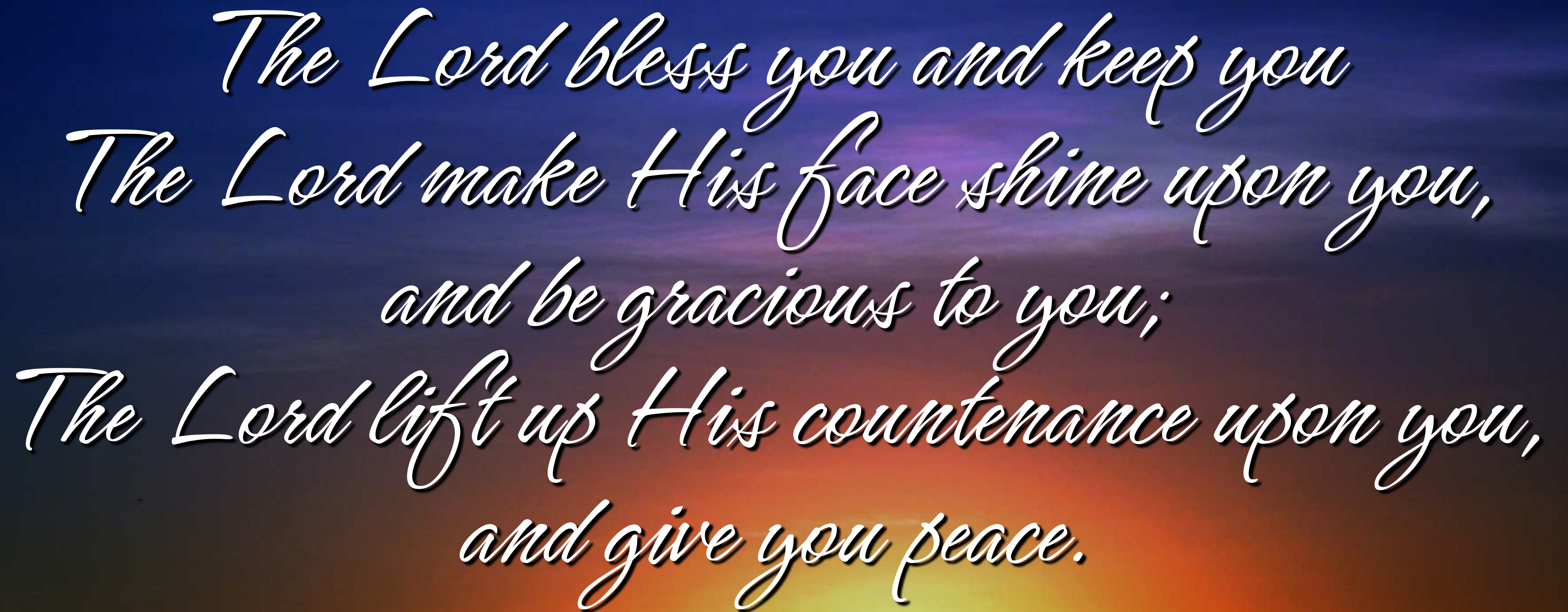
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20th

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Jesus First
NEW ZEALAND



The Lord bless you and keep you
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
and give you peace.