I had an experience in Albania. I think Albania had been open for just a few days. You know, it had been closed for nearly 50 years, and we met with a group of Christians. Every Christian there who was an Albanian native had been a Christian no longer than three weeks. Now, they had no background for the Christian faith whatsoever. They were just figuring out who God was. They didn't know anything about Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, or Moses, or David. They were just barely getting to know the name Jesus Christ.

I was asked to speak to this group, and as I was sitting there, I decided that I would bring the deepest message of which I was capable and probably the deepest message I ever brought in my life; the kind of thing you heard last night, and maybe even more. Now, these were Christians who had known the Lord for less than a month. You would think I should bring a very simple message to those people. Well, the message was simple, but it was way out there somewhere in the ectoplasm, and they understood every bit of it. **Audience**: They had no baggage.

They had absolutely no baggage. They were more prepared to hear that than the folks in this room are because we all come with baggage. It's almost impossible to communicate Christ to us because we've focused so much on applying the Christian life rather than on the Lord Himself.

Let me make clear again this morning why this conference has been called. Or maybe you don't know, so I'll tell you. Last night I shared a little of my personal background. I grew up a Baptist. I got saved early on, in college. I went to seminary, studied in Europe, and became a pastor. If you are a pastor, I give you my deepest sympathies. I talked a little bit last night about the first-century story that we've never heard from beginning to end, unbroken, with such things as the epistles in their chronological order rather than the order they're in your New Testament. They're in absolutely chaotic order…the letters. They have no rhyme, no reason; just an insane arrangement of Paul's letters in the New Testament. If you put them in their proper order, you can take the whole story and put it together.

I know that the word pastor appears once in the New Testament. Probably a mistranslation anyway. That's the strangest thing about the Bible and us. I've so often heard it said, "Well, sure, there are pastors in the New Testament. In Ephesians, it says there are pastors." How can we take a modern-day practice of the pastorate, and because the word pastor appears, justify what we are today by one verse, in fact, one word? In fact, maybe half a word, because it may be simply a pastor-teacher. Do you understand what I just said? It's very difficult to get past that. If you know the story, if you know the story, not the verses, not the chapters, but if you know the story, a pastor never emerges. He's not in the story - the modern-day pastor. Yet we've cooked him up since the Reformation; he didn't exist before the Reformation.

Martin Luther invented him out of whole cloth. Boy, we've ended up with a tradition that'll be here until the crack of doom. It's an artificial life, an artificial position, an artificial function, and an artificial practice. I sympathize because I've been one. I became an evangelist, and then after that, I left the institutional church. I had two things in my heart to know that I did not know. I was saved, and I had about as much information as a typical Christian does, but there was one thing I knew: I

did not know my Lord well. The other one was that I was up to here with church as it is practiced today, and that story that came together there in my study; I worked on it for a year, putting together the first-century story. That story destroyed my life as a Christian in the institutional church.

I knew long ago there was something there that's not here today. I went out looking for someone who knew my Lord, and I went out looking for somebody, someplace, somewhere that was experiencing what they experienced in the first century. I'm not talking about power and miracles, this and that. I'm talking about the body of Christ; just the body of Christ, and you know, with little exception, I never found either one of those.

There was a dear woman in my life. She was a missionary from China and had come back during World War II. She was 70 years old when I met her. She showed me Christ, but nobody could show me the church. I don't mean to be critical, but I went straight to the Plymouth Brethren. Now, if there's a Plymouth Brethren in here, you're going to forgive me. You have to. You're a Christian. Maybe Brethrenism is a good thing for some, but it just wasn't what would satisfy my spirit.

That was a long, long time ago, folks. It's been 40 years. I left the institutional church when I was 29. Call me 70, but don't say it real loud. I will tell you that I talked about what happened before creation, and a great deal did happen before creation. But as much as I talked about that, I also said that you and I cannot comprehend that our Lord is free of space and time. Well, now that's just a nice, simple little sentence that doesn't mean a thing. It is hard for us to grasp that He is, and that means He is at creation. He is before creation. He is in creation. He is now. He is at the end of creation, and He is in the eternal future. That's very simple for Him because creation is in Him. He surrounds it. He's at the beginning and at the end, and He's everywhere else as far as His presence is concerned. Not His content, but His presence.

He sees the end from the beginning because He is at the end as well as the beginning. I have a point above just telling you all of that, and that's to tell you what an incredible person it is who at this moment indwells you. I would really, and this is not something I would normally do, I would implore every one of you who are new here this morning to get that recording and listen to it because the church of Jesus Christ is built on a revelation of the real Christ. We cannot have church if we have not seen such a Lord, and beyond that, to know such a Lord. The one thing I would have for you is to know Him, and to know His church as a living experience, not as a place you go on Sunday morning.

Ask any of them where the Bible is in their lives, and they will all get shy, like they were trying to keep a secret from you. They do this all the time, don't they? I wish you would stop that. The reason is they hear you saying to them, "How much do you read and study the Bible?" Well, we don't study the Bible. We experience Scripture, and we use it as much as, or more than, any group of Christians I've ever met in my life or ever heard about. It's just that we have a relationship to the Scripture that's not here (head). It's here (heart/spirit), and we are with the Scripture every day of our lives. As we come together, though, you will never hear us reference Scripture intellectually;

you can't catch us at that. The testimony you will hear will be Christ. The Christ that the brothers and sisters have encountered in their use of the Scripture. Is that true? Okay.

We don't study Scripture. We don't go in there trying to find out what it's talking about on some particular subject. For us, Scripture is a living experience with the Lord, and if you don't understand that, you should—the difference between dead letter and living spirit. Now, I have just confessed to you the greatest single secret I would keep from you at all costs if I could. We really do use Scripture all the time, but we've never yet figured out how to study it. We encounter it.

I want to go back into the eternals with you for a moment. I'll tell you another thing they're debating right now. I'll state it exactly the way I read it. If we can remember the past, there is no known reason in physics why we cannot also remember the future. Well, maybe they cannot and maybe we cannot, but I can tell you one who can. He not only remembers the past that is in mass, the physical, but He can also remember the mass that is the future. He can also remember the ends of eternity that are to come, because they are all in Him.

There was an age before ages. There was a time before time. There was a non-time when He existed before creation, and that is your Lord, and there was nothing out there but Him. I want to pursue that Lord a little more this morning, because we have not looked at Him, and because of this, we have not been able to truly understand what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have been telling us.

I guess we'll have to use our imaginations. That's the only thing we have: our right brain, even to hope to understand that out there, before there was anything, there was the Lord. Now, He was a citizen of a non-realm. This means that He had a culture we don't have. He had a way of thinking that is not ours. He had a conception of things even though there were no things. Nonetheless, He had a way of comprehending, of laying hold of that we know nothing about. He had a citizenship, a life. He had a way, a way that was divine, that He had lived in throughout all past eternity.

He had a history long before He was born in Bethlehem. He'd been around a long, long time. He had a way of comprehending that you and I cannot comprehend. Now, that's not all. There was a form of life in eternity past before creation. Now, what form of life was that? It was a biological form of life. You could put it on the biological chart. It was divine life, not human life, divine life.

Now, divine life has a way of thinking. I'm going to tell you how it thinks, how divine life thinks. Divine life doesn't think; divine life “revelates.” Divine life has revelation, not what we have. What we have here is a result of the fall. We ate of the tree of knowledge; this (our head) is where we've been ever since, right here, and it's a stumbling block to know our Lord. Fortunately, He has given us some aid here. I want you to see a Lord with citizenship, with a way of thinking or comprehending, that we can lay hold of. A form of life that is uniquely His divine life, and there's just a way that divine life lives.

Metaphorically, what kind of life does God live when He gets out of bed in the morning? He lives by divine life. We live by human life, and there's a difference. There's a huge difference between

those two kinds of life forms on this planet. If you look at a biological chart, human life is the highest. Then they tell us about a pig. That kind of fits, doesn't it? A pig is right under us. Did you know that? Or maybe it's a porpoise, but one of those two. A pig's more intelligent than a dog. You can tell because it never does anything.

So there's animal life, and then under animal life would be the life of the birds…this is Genesis. Under that would be the life of the fish, and under that would be the life of the herbs. The highest form of life has a way of thinking. It has a culture; it has neuropathways; it has schematics. You feed a piece of information into a human, and he'll process it a certain way, and it'll come out over here. That's human life. It has predictable ways, but that's not the highest life in the universe. The highest life in the universe is divine life.

There is a life between man and God. You know what it is? Psalms tell us, "And He made us a little lower than the angels." So, it's divine life, angelic life, unfortunately, human life, animal life, bird life, fish life, being very simple here, and herb life, tree life, and grass, things like this, unconscious life. Well, each one of those has a way. Each one of them has a habitat. Grass lives out of the ground. Birds live in the sky. They have a way with them. They have an instinct. The fish, I suppose, have some consciousness.

Then you get up to the animals, and you get some real consciousness there. A dog will bark, a bird will fly, a sheep will go baaa, and a cat will do all sorts of strange things, and each has a way. Each one of them is different, and we have a habitat on Earth. It is a habitat we should not have, but we have it because of the fall, and it's called civilization. There is supposed to be another habitat on this planet. Every human being in this room has a longing for that habitat if you are saved, and all the urges and longings you've got, and you've spoken in tongues. You've read your Bible, you believe in once saved, always saved, you go to church every Sunday, you tithe, and there's still something gnawing at you. It's because you're not living in your natural habitat: the church of Jesus Christ. She is 24 hours a day. She's not working two hours a week, and she looks a whole lot like Jesus Christ's natural habitat.

Now, we need to understand Jesus Christ's natural habitat. Before He came to earth, He lived in the invisibles and in the spirituals. What do we mean by the spirituals? He is spirit; that's His natural state. Jesus Christ's natural state was not in a human body; that came later.

The natural habitat of your Lord is spirit and spiritual. That's where He was. That's where He lived. He had a right way of thinking and revelation. We need to understand that He was there a long time, and He had a way of thinking, and if you read the gospels in search of that Lord, you will find Him. He created mass, and suddenly things started ticking, and time started passing, and space was there. Now, let me give you an understanding of what I mean by space and what the universe means by space.

This is space right here, and you and I are Christians gathered in it. Now let's say this building lasts a hundred years. There may be a different time when, a hundred years from now, a group of

Christians will gather in this same room. This is a place, but that will be a different time. So this is place; time moves. Who knows what will be in this place a thousand years from now. If it's still alive, this planet, I can guess it'll be an apartment building, 2,000 feet high, with little bitty cubicles that people slide into every night if the population keeps growing the way it is.

Space and time came into existence, but they are actually foreign to what has been around the longest. Not only foreign, but temporal. The spiritual realm is here. The spiritual realm is superior to the temporal realm, to this creation. Now, this creation started out looking pretty good, but it fell. It will end at His command. It will dissolve just like they watched those molecules disappear. It will be gone. Space and time will be no more, and the angel will declare, "There will be no more time." And we will be back to a new spiritual realm.

Now, all of that to say, He visited here one time. He came out of that realm, a divine creature living by divine life, and He came here and became a human. He added humanity to His divinity. He came here with a purpose: to add divinity to your humanity, to reverse the thing…to reverse the process. We talk a lot about His birth, but we ought to really talk about His conception in Mary's womb. Probably God has no DNA, but we need all the help we can get here. The DNA of God met the DNA of a woman, and the Son of God was conceived. Jesus is totally divine; a totally unfallen human. Now, let me explain that.

There's no such thing as a seed of a woman, and yet, in Genesis 3, we are told that He will come and be born of the seed of a woman. Did you know that you can't pass the fall through women? It takes a man to pass the fall from one generation to the next. That explains an awful lot. Alright, most of you have read this or heard it. There are certain physical laws about mutation - Mutants. A woman's chromosomes never obey the laws of mutation. The only way a man can get onto this planet is by the laws of mutation. The chromosomes have to break and mutate. That brings forth a male. This is a scientific fact, brothers. I hate to tell you - we are mutants. Since the fall, we have been mutants.

Now, ladies, that will help you understand us, but that day, Mary's unbroken chromosome met perfect, sinless, holy, pure, undefiled God. He was born, and I'm going to tell you something else. When He was sitting there in the crib, He didn't look up and say, "Well, y'all think I'm God. Y'all don't know it, but I'm God." He had to grow into the revelation, but there came a moment when He could remember the past and all that He had done in the age of mass, and He could remember eternity past. I have a notion He could also remember the future, and He grew up with perfect knowledge of all that he was in the past. Now, what was He in the past? In the past, He was the only reality, back there in eternity before creation. Everything that we see today is a shadow of what He was in reality.

You and I have never seen water. That's the shadow of Him who is water. You and I have never seen food. That is a shadow of Him who is the real food. You and I have never seen light. Have you ever looked at the sun kind of obliquely? Can you tell it's yellowish? In fact, it has a dull look inside. That's not light; that's a picture of light. There was light.

We don't have real life; only one has life, and that is the Lord who declared, “I am Life.” Now, this is God's thinking. This is the thinking of God incarnate. He is real light. He is real life. He is real food. He is real drink. He is the real manna. He is the real Passover. He is the real peace. Christ is peace. The peace you and I have is a shadow of His peace until we have Him; then, and only then, do we have peace.

So He came with this way of thinking and this knowledge of who He was. Have you ever noticed how self-secure this person was when He was on earth? Alright, let's get Him on Earth, but before we go any further, remember something. Please remember this. At first, you won't have any idea why I'm saying it. Virtually all the epistles were written before the Gospels were written. Now, let that soak in a moment. Do you understand what that means? That the epistles of John, of Paul, of Peter make no reference to the Christ of 33 years. Give it a moment of thought.

The epistles never present to us…I think there are three or four sentences in all the letters that quote Christ, and just a few more that refer to His human life and the deeds He did on this earth. The epistles present to us *that* Christ, and not the Christ of the 33 years. We have focused on the 33 years, and we have done it in a most fallen way.