Jeremiah 23:23-24 “Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD, "and not a God far away? 24 Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.

I remember that one of the things said about a great work of art in this world is, “What the author writes is just timeless. His words and themes cover all times and circumstances so that we can still identify and appreciate his work.” And to this day, the work that I am referring to is still considered classic and important to study.

Unfortunately I am referring to Shakespeare. Now, I will admit that the courses I took where we covered Shakespeare were very interesting. For that matter, I still have all my Shakespeare books, and although it has been awhile, I have indeed picked them up and re-read them for the good works and stories they are. For that matter, I am always amazed as I watch modern day movies at how many of them really are just a rehashing of those wonderful and old Shakespeare stories.

So I wonder, why do we consider the works of Shakespeare timeless and universal and yet when it comes down to Scripture we will proclaim that work of art, that classic, timeworn and totally out of date. Yet, here we have a section of God’s Word before us and in truth, it is as if this section where written for today’s world and circumstances. In other words, God’s Word is not timeworn and out of date but is right to point and reminds us constantly that nothing much changes when it comes to our world. Let’s consider then our words under the theme: **THE HAMMER OF GOD. 1st. His Word. 2nd. His Truth. 3rd. God!**

I must confess that my theme is deliberate. Years ago, one of the great books that I read was titled: **The Hammer of God.** It was done by author Bo Giertz a Swiss theologian and it is excellent. As you can well guess, his book was titled after this particular section of God’s Word and is an awesome work on the importance and necessity of God’s Word in our lives. If you want a good read, I believe that book is in our Church library.

That title and theme says a lot. Please note our theme is really based on the last verses of our Old Testament reading and yet it encompasses all of our reading. Our last verse said this: **“Is not my word like fire and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”** Here, Dear believers, is the very truth and marvel of God’s Word.

What is so special about God’s Word? Well, even if you didn’t believe it was God’s Word, the universal truths it shows and the timelessness of what it reveals is in itself well worth the study. If we were to take a fact from the book of Ecclesiastes we get the point…”**There is nothing new under the sun.”** What is fascinating, if you read the Bible just from that stand point, the idea of learning history and how man has behaved over the centuries, you would learn a lot and understand a lot about humankind. And then if we add the fact, as we Christian’s believe, that the Bible is God’s Word, God’s revelation of history and humankind, the Bible becomes even more special and important. In other words, we believe it to be divine revelation and knowledge for the good of the world.

Take the verses that I highlighted as our text. What do those verses say? Well, if you think denial of God and his ways, knowledge, power and majesty is something new to the world today, you would be sadly mistaken. What Jeremiah knew is still happening today. Our world is still in gross denial about the truth of God. Those opening, rhetorical questions are so pointed. Listen again, **“Am I only a God nearby and not a God far away? …Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? …Do not I fill heaven and earth?”** Boy, there is our world in a nutshell. About the only thing that has changed is our arguments for why we should ignore and deny God, but trust me, there is really nothing new in those either. We learn a simple truth, we live in a world where we can expect that God and his Word is going to be denied and vilified just because.

Well, the “just because” really has a reason. The reason is revealed in God’s Word. We, and by the we I mean humankind, ever since the fall into sin are sinful and by nature enemies of God and his truth. By nature we stand opposed to God and his marvel. By nature we deny his ability to know all, be all and do all. We think, for the most part, that God is nothing more than a figment of our imagination. Yet, here is an interesting question. If we are so smart that we now know God only a figment of our imagination, why do we as humans continue to pursue, support and follow so many different religions? If God is only imagination, then why are there any religions or any “spirituality” at all today? Well, the answer is: Because deep down, we know there is a God and that we will one day have to answer to him! That’s why the Word is described as being **“like fire and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces.”**

Of course, the problem we have is then revealed as the same problem Jeremiah had. Jeremiah was a prophet of God. He was proven a prophet not only because of his faithfulness but also because everything he said and revealed came true. Think of this, Jeremiah, especially for the majority of his ministry was persecuted, laughed at and ridiculed for what he said. And what he said was rarely complimentary to the Jewish nation and people. Yet Jeremiah was put in their Bible! He trashes them as lousy children of God, faithless, foolish, blind and damned and yet he is in their Bible! Interesting isn’t it?

As you heard our text do you see another problem that Jeremiah and the Word of God had? Yeah, the false prophets. Those who don’t want to believe God, yet who want to play at believing God, who want to pretend to teach God, who want to be respected as Godly and good but who are anything but. Yep, false teachers! Here is my simple way to figure out whether or not you are dealing with a false teacher. One (the most obvious I think): They teach you that salvation is really a matter of what you are and what you do. They will do this in the name of Jesus and God but it still always boils down to the fact that you getting to heaven or not is based on you and your personal level of goodness. Two: They will tell you they are going to teach God’s Word but you keep finding out that they skip this part, throw out that part, deny this section, well, basically they cut and clip God’s Word to fit what they consider to be good, right and saving. Three: They tend to teach about the example of Jesus, about how God wants us to live and about how if we work at it, we can be closer and more into God. In other words, it is about what you are to do for God rather than preaching and teaching what God has done for you in Jesus. You know they have a problem when they can’t explain why bad things happen in the world or how God can and does act in our lives for our good. They have great difficulties with Hebrews 12, our Epistle reading.

False teachers today, abound. They keep telling you they are going to teach you God’s Word but before it is said and done you are looking to how you feel, what you experience, what you sense is right and good and so on. And yet, if God is real, as I think He is, then don’t you think the real God would reveal himself clearly, unequivocally, and truthfully? That’s what the Bible is. It is God’s revelation of his love and mercy, his grace and kindness, his act of bringing us eternal life and salvation despite ourselves! It is the history of God’s salvation in Jesus the Savior.

That brings us to God. God’s Word reveals God. How God so loved us that He promised, sent and fulfilled in Jesus the needs of eternal life and salvation. Let’s just focus here for a moment.

Did you notice our last words spoke of God’s Word as being a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? That’s a reference to the law of God, that law that God gave us to show us His do’s and don’ts in this world. Now, those do’s and don’ts were not given so we could earn our way to heaven but rather to clearly and precisely show we COULD NOT! That’s why the hammer breaks the rock. We are the rock. God’s Word breaks down our ideas that we can save ourselves, that somehow or in some way we can meet and exceed the demands of the Holy God. Just this morning on Face Book this quote was found and it is to the point: *“The most damnable and pernicious heresy that has ever plagued the mind of man was the idea that somehow he could make himself good enough to deserve to live with an all-holy God.”* That’s a quote from Luther. How awesome and true.

The law reveals we cannot meet the demands and commands of the Lord our God. So God did something about that. He sent his Son the Savior. That part of our passage that said, **“Is not my word like a fire,”** that is the part that speaks of the Gospel, yes, speaks of what the Savior would do.

In this case the idea of the fire is not one of destruction but rather one of purifying and cleansing. Just as gold and silver is refined in the fire, so we are refined by the Lord our God. We are precious to him and what he has done is sent Jesus, who took away our sins by His suffering and death. And then so we would know that what Jesus did is ours, God raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is our everything! In that resurrection of Jesus is the fulfillment and perfection of God’s Word solidified. In that resurrection of Jesus the faithfulness and truths of God are testified to, for the entire Bible was and is geared to our grasping this redemptive work of Jesus promised and fulfilled by the Lord. The Bibles is shown to be true in everything. In the resurrection of Jesus is found the solid foundation for the hope and wonder of heaven as our home. Jesus said that he would die and come back to life. He did! So when Jesus says that because He lives we will too!, then believe that testimony of Jesus.

So we learn this simplicity. God is revealed in his Word. His Word is true and faithful. His Word shares with us the awesome truth that salvation has been won in Jesus and that in Jesus we have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. God simply asks that we believe what His Word says, yes, that we believe that Jesus was and is the very heart, core and marvel of God, the Word of God given for our salvation and redemption.

Yep, not much has changed in the world. The world still laughs and scorns the true God and follows its own path of self-righteous destruction. The world still holds onto magic and space aliens and spirit worlds and all sorts of other “spiritual things” that are really nothing more than our proclaiming that we don’t need God. But He is out there. He has revealed himself. He has shown you His love and saving grace. Hang onto the truth of God. Hang on to the Word of God as His truth. Then you will know what is true: God is God always. Amen.