

# Why Do We Believe the Bible? #1 (The Bible and Jesus Christ)

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*Why Do We Believe the Bible?*

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We're here tonight to answer, really, the most fundamental question in all of life in some respects, to answer the question: why do we believe the Bible? We've done a series of messages answering key questions in the Christian faith over the past several Thursday nights going back to January: why do we believe in God; why do we believe in a young earth; why are we Protestants, Is the most recent thing that we addressed as I recall, and tonight we come to something that undergirds all of that: why do we believe the Bible?

Now, the Scripture, as you know quite well, claims to be the word of God. The 66 books of the Bible repeatedly speak in terms of, "Thus saith the Lord. Then the word of the Lord came to me," and, of course, the most well-known passage, kind of the definitive passage on the authority of Scripture, comes from 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17, "All Scripture is inspired by God," breathed out by God, as it were, "and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." And so the Scripture makes that claim for itself. The question we're answering tonight is just a little bit different, the question tonight is: how do we know to accept that claim? How is it that we know that we should receive the word of God as fully authoritative, as the divine revelation that it is, how do we know that? The key for us this evening, and really for all of life, is to be able to answer that question and to understand it from God's perspective, and to be able to answer that question as God sees it, not in a way and not start by trying to frame our answer in a way that we think will be acceptable to our unbelieving friends. Our idea here is not to frame an answer that a hostile unbeliever would find acceptable, we want to see what the Scriptures say about it and then start from there. We want to think God's thoughts after him.

And I was thinking about something that helps you see how crucial and important it is to approach it that way. We have to understand, you and I have to start from the understanding, that we are totally incapable of recognizing and judging what ultimate authority would look like, what it is. We are totally incapable of doing that on our own, and it's easy to see that and understand it. We can't even get tomorrow's weather right, right? We don't know what tomorrow's weather is going to be like and when we think we do, we get that wrong also. Well, if we can't get it right consistently on a little thing, what makes us think that we have the capacity to judge eternal truth and to recognize the

ultimate authority in the universe? We're fallen. We're finite. We're sinful. Our judgment is impaired. How could we ever get truth right? So the question is: how do we know, why is it that we believe the Bible, and we need to start from a position of understanding that somehow that answer has to come from outside us because our own sinful hearts, our hearts are deceitful, they are wicked, they are desperately sick, Jeremiah 17:9 says, and so we need to start from a position of humility of knowledge and recognizing our weakness and our limitations in order to ever get the answer correct.

Well, there's a couple of different ways that the answer to this question has been approached: why do we believe the Bible? And the first one that I want to give to you is I'm going to cover very, very rapidly, but it's the evidential approach, you might say. The evidential approach and those of you that came of age spiritually under the ministry of Campus Crusade, will recognize the arguments and the things that I'm about to say here as they were popularized by Josh McDowell and other theologians, lesser known, that made similar arguments, and this approach asks us to consider the evidence that supports the uniqueness of the Bible. And there are some very interesting and to a redeemed mind, compelling things that they ask us to consider. I'm going to give you four, kinda four sub point here if you want to take notes, and I'm kind of summarizing and not giving the fullness of this position because it's not ultimately what I want to focus on this evening.

Coming from an evidential approach, they would ask you to consider, first of all: the indestructibility of the Bible. The indestructibility of the Bible and the argument goes something like this: the Bible which was written 2,000 years ago on materials that are perishable even, and this Bible has withstood vicious attacks from its enemies as no other book has. People have over the centuries tried to burn it, ban it, and outlaw it, from the days of the Roman emperors to communist countries and other hostile governments trying to stifle and suppress the Bible, suppress the word of God, you know, Arab countries these days, all seeking to silence the Bible with the imprimatur of government authority and with persecution and burning the Bible, and yet here we are 2,000 years after the fact, and we still have the Bible in all of its magnificence. So one theologian said this, quote, "The fact of the indestructibility of the Bible strongly suggests that it is the embodiment of divine revelation." We have an indestructible book. We have, as some have referred to it, we have an anvil that has worn out the hammers of persecution and book burnings and the anvil still stands as a testimony to its divine origin and so they say it's the indestructibility of the Bible that you should consider as part of it, and there's a building case that's made here, several different lines of support along this line.

Secondly, and all of these are, obviously I'm not taking time to develop the thoughts, I just want to get it out in your mind. The more important aspect of this is not the individual points here but rather, just the mindset that how they approach supporting the claim that the Bible is the word of God, consider the indestructibility of the Bible. Secondly, you will be told to consider the character of the Bible. Consider the character of the Bible, and this argument goes something like this: the Bible presents a high view of God and exposes the sin of man. The Bible has a remarkable unity, even though it was written by 40 different authors over a period of some 1,600 years or so, and it has one doctrinal system and one plan of salvation. And you think about it and, you know, if we

tried to get five politicians into a room to agree on a controversial policy issue, they wouldn't be able to come to an agreement on that in one place in one period of time, well, what does it say about a book that was written over 1,600 years by 40 different men presenting a unified system of doctrine that exalts God and exposes the sin of man? The Bible deals frankly with the sins of its characters. This is a unique book, they say, based on its very character, on the nature of its content. So the same theologian said, quote, "We must conclude that it embodies divine revelation since mere men could not have originated such a world and life view." The character of the Bible testifies to its uniqueness. The indestructibility of the Bible testifies to its uniqueness and it stands out as you consider it amongst other books.

Thirdly, the argument goes, consider the influence of the Bible. The influence of the Bible. And this argument goes along these lines: the Bible has produced some of the highest results in all walks of life. It's led to great achievements in art and architecture, in literature, in music. It has influenced the laws of nations, produced great social reforms and permanently changed countless lives, millions of lives under the influence of the Bible. The argument goes: surely this is proof that it is the revelation of God to humanity. The impact, the influence of the Bible, would be what we look at and say, "Well, this must be somehow the word of God or, at least, it's probable that it's the word of God."

Fourthly, they'll point to the issue of fulfilled prophecy, and that argument goes like this: only God can reveal the future. Fulfilled prophecy indicates that the writers of prophecy possessed his mind as they wrote. And many prophecies about the course of human nations have been fulfilled; you have prophecies fulfilled in the person of Christ, and that proves that the Old Testament especially expresses divine revelation. So you see there is a cumulative impact of the arguments being made here: the character of the Bible, the indestructibility of the Bible, the influence, fulfilled prophecy.

Now, all of that stuff to us is encouraging, rightfully so. It's important things to know, but when it comes down to what the argument that is being made, you have to understand what they're saying as they make this argument. Let's just hear it in their own words. Josh McDowell said this, he said, "This does not prove that the Bible is the word of God but it shows that the Bible is unique." They're saying, "We're not making a claim that this is the word of God based on these things, we're just showing the uniqueness of the Scriptures and then you have to consider it later from there."

Another writer said this, and listen to this very carefully because I want you to think through what's being said. He says, quote, "If we weigh separately the arguments presented in this chapter, we may not find any of them conclusive, but if we permit each argument to contribute its modicum of truth, we shall be forced to the conclusion that the Bible is the embodiment of divine revelation." Now, I'm going to say something really pejorative against what he just said and summarize it and twist it and be unfair to what he says, but I want you to think with me and understand why I'm saying this. Basically what he's saying is that, "Look, I admit that I've got a series of weak arguments here, but if you take them all together, it establishes a probability that I might be right, right?" That's what

he's saying. These arguments individually, you may not find them conclusive, but if you take them all together, then you get a probability that this is probably the word of God.

Now, let me ask you this: do you think that God gave his word to us with the intention that we would receive it, not as certain authority, but merely as something that's probably correct? Does that sound like the testimony of the holy, omniscient, omnipotent God of the universe that he would deliver his word and leave us to arguments based on probability that this is his word? That doesn't sound right, does it? Something doesn't connect there. Now, look, I'm not picking fights with Josh McDowell whose ministry has had far more reach than mine would in 25,000 lifetimes and I'm grateful in the things that he has put together are really wonderfully documented, but that's a wrong way to approach it. And understand that what's going on there too, you really need to think through this and realize what's being done is that it's making an appeal to the reason of man which we know from other Scripture is fallen and unreliable, making an appeal to the reason of man and asking man to stand in judgment of whether this is God's word or not. Beloved, that can't possibly be the right way to approach the answer to the question: why do we believe the Bible? That can't be right and it's not right. These arguments are fine as far as they go; they're secondary; they're encouraging to you and me as Christians to consider these things, but the thing that's largely lacking is a solid center of biblical thinking that underlies it all. You know, the prophets didn't speak and say, "This is probably the word of the Lord," as they pronounced judgment on the nation of Israel. No, they said with clarity, with certainty, "Thus saith the Lord," and the question is: what do we have to say today?

Well, let me give you a second point here that's also going to have a number of sub points, but I'm going to give to you what I want to term "the biblical approach." The biblical approach, and this may be new to a lot of you but when you see it and understand it, you're going to say, "Of course, it couldn't have been any other way." You can sum up the biblical approach to answering the question, "Why do we believe the Bible?" we can answer this question with two words. We'll use more than two words. I've never said anything in less than, I don't know, whatever. I've never said anything in two words but start your thinking here with these two words about why do we believe the Bible, two words: Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the reason that we believe the Bible to be God's word.

Now, stay with me as we go through this. First of all, as we consider the biblical approach, we have to start from the right starting point. Over and over again in the years to come, you'll hear me always talk about context and the right starting point. You have to start your thinking from the right starting point in order to get to the right conclusion. If you start from the wrong premise with the wrong presupposition, with the wrong philosophy guiding your thinking, you're going to come out in the wrong place. So we have to start with the right starting point and we ask this question: what is the supreme authority? Where do we go for an authoritative answer on anything? We've already said that it can't possibly be us; it can't be me that's the ultimate authority here because I can't get the weather right. I can't remember to bring my wallet sometimes. What on earth makes us think that we could judge matters of great eternal significance like eternal truth? We have to humble ourselves and recognize our limits. But when we come to the

Scripture and ask the question, "Where does ultimate authority lie?" let's go to Ephesians 1 and start to get an answer here. Ephesians 1, starting in verse 18. We're starting from the right starting point when we start with our Lord Jesus Christ and when we think through the implications of our relationship to him.

Ephesians 1:18, Paul is praying for those who would receive his letter and he says, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened." Okay, good. Now we're getting somewhere. "I have a heart that doesn't understand. I have a heart that lacks perspective, that lacks depth, that's superficial, that's biased in my own favor," and so to say that someone is praying that "the eyes of my heart would be enlightened," okay, we're getting somewhere now. "So that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." He's praying for all of these spiritual blessings to be bestowed on those who would read his letter. And he goes on, he says, "These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead," now watch what happens, this is really important. Now he's speaking about Christ raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, "and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places," verse 21, "far above," far above, "all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." Start there, beloved. Realize that the supreme authority in the universe is Jesus Christ; that there is no contest to his authority; and that his authority is independent of what men think about him, his authority is independent of the philosophies of the age, his authority is independent of anything that men could ascribe to him. He's far above it all. He has a unique uncontested, unparalleled, unchallenged position of authority preeminent in all of the universe.

Look over at Colossians 1 for just a moment. Colossians 1 just to kind of reinforce this, perhaps from a little bit of a different perspective. Colossians 1:15, speaking of Christ, it says, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." It's not speaking chronologically there but in preeminence; he's first in preeminence over all creation. "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities," there it is, preeminent over all the authorities, "all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together," watch this, "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."

Now listen, he's preeminent over the church as well. He's preeminent over us as believers. Jesus said in John 13:13, "You call me teacher and Lord and you're right for so I am." That has implications. He is our teacher. He is our Lord. Listen, when you became a Christian, you surrendered your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That means that what he says determines what you believe. That means that what he says you trust him for completely. If you've entrusted your eternal soul to his redemption because you believed that his work on the cross was for you and that he was raised from the dead for you in order that you might be reconciled to God, if you've entrusted your entire eternal soul to him, then obviously part of that is that you are trusting him for his authority and what he

says about authority, right? This is just part of being a Christian, is that we are so completely submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, that we look to him in dependence for everything. We look to him in dependence for our physical needs. We look to him in dependence for the forgiveness of our sins. And as a corollary to all of that, we look to him to help us understand what divine authority is. It's all about Christ and his authority. We look to him.

Now, let us hit the pause button for just a moment. If you look back on the evidential approach, you don't really see that emphasis brought out. It's appealing to people to use their reason. It's appealing to them to consider the evidence and weigh it and come to the right conclusion. And they're not even suggesting that this is a compelling argument that the Bible is, "Thus the word of God," they're just trying to establish a probability case that it's unique. That can't be right. That can't be our best approach to this issue. We have to come to Christ in submission to him, realizing his supreme authority, and think with me, before we go to any more Scripture, wouldn't it make sense if we are to live by the word of God, wouldn't it make sense if we're going to be accountable eternally to God for the way that we respond to his word, wouldn't it make sense that we would have direction about the nature of his word from the one we call Lord and teacher? How could his Saviorhood, how could his Lordship, how could his provision for us be complete if we didn't have something directly from him to help us understand where our authority lies and what we are to look to? That would just be incomprehensible.

So here's the point: we are considering why do we believe the Bible and we say, "Okay, Christ is the supreme authority," we ask a simple question at that point, it's a really simple question: what does Christ think? It doesn't matter what I think about it. In one sense, it doesn't matter what you think about it because we're not the authority. What does the authority say? What does Christ say about this? Well, he says a whole lot more than you might think. Our Lord Jesus Christ viewed Scripture as completely authoritative. He said in John 10:35, he said, "The Scriptures cannot be broken." The Scriptures cannot be broken, and we're going to start to build a thorough view of this. And to do that, turn over to the book of Matthew 5 as we consider what Jesus thought about the Scriptures because what he thinks about the Scriptures is what we're going to think about them also. We're not going to separate ourselves from Christ and think that we've got a better idea, a better approach than he does. We couldn't possibly think that when we realize that he is the unique authority in all the universe. We wouldn't even want to go there. A true Christian doesn't want to separate themselves from the way that Christ thinks. We want to align ourselves more and more with the way he thought and the way he lived, right?

Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets," the Scriptures, "I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For," he's going to take it another step, "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished." He states it both in the smallest sense and in the biggest sense. The smallest letter or stroke, he's making a reference to the little curves of a Hebrew letter, part of a letter. He says, "Not even a part of a letter of the law will be broken." He says it in that micro-sense and the macro-sense, "until all is accomplished, until all of the law is fulfilled." The Scriptures can't be broken. Jesus says,

"The smallest part of it will be fulfilled. All of it is going to be accomplished." He had a comprehensive view of Scripture that says it is utterly incapable of being violated.

Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." Wow. Now we're talking about preempting the whole realm of authority. Jesus says, "Here it is in the Scriptures, it's all going to be accomplished." How are we to think about the Bible? We should think about it like Jesus did and what Jesus said, what Jesus proclaimed about the Scripture was perfect fulfillment, perfect accomplishment in all of it without exception. Wow.

Turn over to the book of Luke 24, some of the last words that Jesus spoke before his ascension into heaven. Luke 24:44. These are just general statements that Christ made about the Scriptures and he said in Luke 24:44, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things," there it is again, comprehensive, "all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." The threefold division of the Old Testament Scriptures: the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms, and he says it all must be fulfilled. Complete authority, complete fulfillment is going to take place in these Old Testament Scriptures. It can't happen any other way. These words in the Old Testament are completely authoritative.

Verse 45, "Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'" So starting from the complete authority of Scripture, he says to go out and proclaim it to all the nations. There is this universal nature to the authority of Scripture that is woven throughout these parting words that he gave to his disciples. Verse 48, "You are witnesses of these things." Complete authority. That's how Jesus viewed the Scriptures. He said they can't be broken.

Now, let me break this down for you just a little bit more here and give you a sense of what's coming here; we're talking about the biblical approach to why we believe the word of God. We said Jesus Christ is the supreme authority and we want to know what he thinks about it, and we're going to pivot around two different points now for the rest of the evening here. Think about the Bible in terms of the Old Testament and the New Testament, okay? This is how we'll think about it and we'll just make a couple of quick statements here and then support them from Scripture. We have an Old Testament and a New Testament in our Bibles: 39 books in the Old, 27 in the New as they are laid out in our English Bibles. Jesus, watch this, Jesus affirmed the Old Testament which was in existence when he was on earth; he affirmed the Old Testament, that's the first part of it, and secondly, he commissioned the New Testament, that's the second part of it. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament during his time on earth, and secondly, while he was on earth, he commissioned the New Testament and we're going to look at these things more carefully.

But basically what we're saying is: if you stick your finger between the end of Malachi and the beginning of Matthew which I'm about to do here, you stick your finger between the two testaments and you look at it and you say, "Okay, here on the left is the Old Testament, Jesus Christ during his life affirmed it completely and so I receive it as the word of God because of the way Christ treated it during his life on earth and what he taught about the Scriptures." Then you look at the right side which is a little, there's not as many pages in the New Testament, you look at it and you say, "Okay, what followed in the New Testament not only speaks about Christ but it was commissioned by Christ and therefore bears, equally bears his seal of approval, his seal of authority. The seal of authority of Jesus Christ is on the Old Testament and in the New Testament just in different ways, but he gave his unqualified endorsement to both of them."

You see what's happening here, right? You see what we're doing? We're saying, "Okay, who is the authority here?" It's Christ. Christ is the authority. Okay, what did he say about the Scriptures? In general he said none of it is ever going to be broken. It's all going to be fulfilled. Now we're looking at it, you know, we're kind of narrowing the points down here and we're saying he affirmed the Old Testament.

Now here's where we're going to go with this and so we're going to deal with the first line of that: Jesus affirmed the Old Testament with his divine approval, and there is so much that we should say about this and I'm just going to go through it far, far too quickly. I just want to acquaint you and get you comfortable with this approach. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament by which we mean this: Jesus consistently treated the Old Testament as true. He consistently treated, in particular he treated the Old Testament narratives as historical fact, especially on the events that are most vocally rejected today. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament. He accepted its representation of biblical history as completely accurate, true, trustworthy, and reliable.

Let me give you some specific examples out of the book of Matthew to illustrate that for you, starting in, we'll take these chronologically. Starting in Matthew 19, you'll see that Jesus affirmed the Old Testament account of creation. Matthew 19. Jesus affirmed Old Testament history going all the way back to creation. Look at verses 4 and 5 of Matthew 19. The Pharisees had been questioning Jesus about the nature of divorce and in verse 4, "He answered and said, 'Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE,'" a quotation from Genesis 1:27, I believe. Verse 5, "and said," quote, quoting the Old Testament, you see the all caps there in most of your Bibles indicating that this is a quotation from the Old Testament. He said, "'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'?" Quoting from Genesis 2:24. So when he was presented a question about the nature of divorce in his contemporary time, he quoted the Old Testament account of creation to justify the position that he took. He accepted the account of creation as being literally, historically accurate. It's a testimony to, its evidence of how he thought about the Old Testament.

Now, so, he affirmed the account of creation. Look over at Matthew 24:37 through 39. The weight of this argument about Christ and his affirmation, gains more and more

momentum as you consider it in its individual details; rather than just making the general statement, it's good to see it fleshed out in individual details. Matthew 24, beginning in verse 37 as he speaks prophetically about his own coming again to earth, he looks back to the account of Noah in the early chapters of Genesis to say what his future coming is going to be like. He premises the whole reality of his future eschatology on the account of Noah in the Bible.

Look at verse 37, "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be." That only makes sense if Jesus believed the account of Noah precisely as it was presented in the book of Genesis. He accepted the account of Noah in Genesis so much so that he said, "Let me illustrate what my future coming is going to be like. It's going to be just like what you read in the book of Noah." That is a ringing endorsement of the authority of the Old Testament.

Now, time forbids us from going to a lot of different passages where Jesus spoke and affirmed Old Testament history in the stories of Abel, Abraham, Sodom and Gomorrah, Isaac and Jacob, the wilderness serpent, King David, King Solomon, the Queen of Sheba, Elijah, Elisha and others beside. His whole earthly teaching ministry wove Old Testament affirmation through everything that he said. You couldn't begin to separate out the Old Testament from the teaching of Christ and be left with anything coherent at all. The authority of Christ, let me state that a little bit differently: Jesus Christ whom we have already agreed is the preeminent authority in all of the universe because we accept what Scripture says about him and we know that to be true in our own hearts, we believe in him as teacher and Lord, well, our teacher and Lord treated the Old Testament history as being absolutely accurate without exception. You never see him diminishing the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. He treats it as accurate from beginning to end, so he affirmed the Old Testament in its historical accounts.

Now, we've looked at some specific historical examples, let me just give you just a handful of specific ethical examples as well in terms of how he approached his teaching and based his teaching on the authority of the Old Testament. We're looking at ethical examples now; we looked at some historical examples. Look back at Matthew 22. We'll see a couple of things from one passage here. Matthew 22:34, "But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?'" So he's been asked, "What is the dominant ethical principle in the law?" And what does he do? He quotes Scripture. He quotes out of Deuteronomy 6 and he says, "I'll answer your question based on a quotation from the Old Testament." "He said to him," quote, quoting from Deuteronomy 6, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' This is the great and foremost commandment." He taught directly out of the authority of the Old Testament. He affirmed it by the way that he taught in response to a question from this lawyer.

Now, so he says, "You've got to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind." Then he goes on and says, "There is a second like it," verse 39, "'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,'" quoting from Leviticus 19. So when he's presented with a question, "Teach me about the great commandment," he goes to the Old Testament, he quotes it as authoritative, and says, "This is the greatest thing that you can know."

Verse 40, "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." His trust, his acceptance, his affirmation of the Old Testament was so thorough and presupposed that there was no space between what Jesus thought about the Old Testament and how it presented itself. He affirmed it completely by what he taught and the way that he used the Old Testament. If you go over to Mark 7, you can see him teaching about honoring your father and mother from Exodus 20 as well. We won't take the time to turn there.

So, let's back up or come up for just a little breath of air here. Why do we believe the Bible? It starts by remembering that we accept the authority of Christ. We push the question a little further therefore and say, "Did Jesus say anything, did Jesus show anything about what he thought about the Old Testament?" Yes, he did. He affirmed it in its history, he affirmed it in its ethics, therefore the only thing that we can do is to follow in his footsteps to agree with him and say, "The supreme authority has put his mark of approval on these 39 books, therefore I accept them also. I accept them not on the basis of my own judgment. I accept them based on the judgment of the one whom I call Lord, the one whom is unparalleled in authority in the universe." I don't rest my opinion...look, look, we don't accept the authority of Scripture based on the judgments that we have come as we have looked at the outworking of earthly history in relationship to the Bible. That's an interesting field of study, it's important, but that's not the ground that we are standing on. We're not standing on our judgment about things. Oh, it's so important for you to understand this. We are standing on the judgment of Christ. We are standing on something revealed to us. That's why we accept the authority of the Old Testament.

Now, what about the New Testament? The argument is different here but it's no less compelling. Jesus commissioned the New Testament. He commissioned the New Testament. He authorized it in advance. You could say he pre-authenticated it, and we're going to look at a few things here, so we're shifting from the Old Testament to the New Testament now and, again, just focusing on the words of Christ. How did he commission the New Testament? Well, first of all, he prepared for its writing. He prepared for its writing. He didn't actually write it himself, of course, but he prepared for it. He made provision for it both in the provision of the Holy Spirit and in preparing his disciples for the ministry that they would have.

Look at the Gospel of John for this in the upper room discourse, John 14. And if you are getting cramps in your hands from taking notes, good. John 14:26. We're going to look at three passages before I make any further comment. John 14:26, speaking to his disciples, the 11 that were left in the upper room after Judas had departed. He says in verse 25, John 14:25, "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 'But the Helper, the

Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.'" Look over at John 15:26, we'll summarize these. If I comment on them individually, we won't get out of here until midnight. John 15:26. I say that and you say, "Oh, you might be here until midnight but I've got to work tomorrow. I'm out of here." That's all right. John 15:26, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning." And so the Spirit of God was going to testify and aid them in their testimony about Christ, the apostolic testimony about Christ. Chapter 16, verses 12 through 14, he says, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you."

What Jesus is saying in these passages is simply the preparation for where we opened in 2 Timothy 3, "All Scripture is inspired by God," which, by extension, includes the New Testament. What Jesus is saying is he was promising his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come and would help them record in writing the things about him that the church would need going forward until Christ came again. He prepared them for it. The disciples were never left to their own unaided human memory in the writing of Scripture. They had the help of the Holy Spirit. And Jesus, while he was on earth, told them that that was going to happen. He prepared them for it. He commissioned, as it were. He told them, "This is how it's going to happen. You are going to testify about me," and that's not just speaking of their verbal preaching to their first century audience, they testified also in their apostolic writings which are now the New Testament. They testified to the world through their apostolic writings. Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit is going to help you do that. By his omnipotent power, he'll bring to mind, help you remember everything that needs to be said, and he'll aid you in the writing of it." He commissioned it. He authenticated the New Testament in advance while he was still on earth. One writer said this about this aspect of Jesus commissioning the New Testament, based on these passages from John, he said, quote, "This indicates a special, superintending work of the Holy Spirit whereby the disciples would be able to remember and record without error all that Jesus had said." Jesus commissioned the New Testament. He prepared them for it. He said, "Look for this. Wait for this. This is going to come, and when the Spirit comes, you're going to be able to do everything that's necessary to testify about me."

Let's step back for a second. Jesus did that for our sake. It's for the sake of, it was for the sake of what the church would need. He prepared the way so that we would have an authoritative record that we could rely on, not only as we preach the Gospel, but as we hear the Gospel and rely on it. He gave us what was necessary, an authoritative word that we could trust in and rely on for the sake of our eternal salvation and to guide us as we walk the Christian life in this hostile, fallen world. Everything that we're talking about here is a manifestation of unspeakable wisdom and grace to us. He prepared for the writing of the New Testament.

He did more than that, though, he also commissioned the apostles. He commissioned the apostles. Go back to Matthew 28. I know we're covering this real fast. I thought about splitting this up into two sessions, but I've got other things I want to say next week that are much different than this. He commissioned the apostles. Okay, Matthew 28:18, "Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority,'" there it is again, "'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'" Why, beloved, would we look to anyone else to try to understand the nature of the word of God? Why would we start anyplace else? All authority is there in him. This is why we go to Christ and not to our own judgments. Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations," verse 20, "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." He commissioned the apostles to a teaching ministry and part of their teaching ministry was the written record they would leave behind.

Look over at the book of Acts 26. Speaking to the Apostle Paul who, interestingly enough, was not there in Matthew 28, right? He got saved later on. Jesus called him out of his murderous hostility to the church later on after his ascension. Acts 26:14, Paul is describing how Christ called him and stopped him on the road to Damascus and he said in verse 14, "I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles,'" watch this, "'to whom I am sending you.'" Jesus says to Paul, "'I'm sending you to the Gentiles to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'" He commissioned Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. Part of the way that he did that was through the written record that he left behind, 13 Pauline epistles in the New Testament.

Jesus commissioned the apostles to that work and so, in saying that Jesus commissioned the New Testament, we said he prepared for its writing, those passages from John; he commissioned the apostles, Matthew 28, Acts 26, a whole lot of others that we're not taking the time to look at; and then, watch this, as the apostles began to write out, began to write to the churches, began to actually write the word of God, speak the word of God, notice, oh, this is so important! As you go through the New Testament, you see that they are conscious of communicating the word of God as they wrote. Not writing in their own name and in their own power, but writing the word of God, teaching the word of God in the ministry that the Lord commissioned them to.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 14, and we're just about to wrap it up. I'm going to leave the next part for next week. 1 Corinthians 14:37, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment." He says, "I'm writing to you the commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ. What I say to you comes from the Lord Jesus." This was not a boast that went beyond the reality of his

commission. As you trace it back to what we've seen, this was exactly what the Lord appointed them to do. He gave them the Holy Spirit to enable them, to equip them, and then commissioned them to teach in his name, and so as they're writing out the letters, that's what they're doing. Paul says, "I'm writing to you the Lord's commandment."

Look over at 1 Thessalonians now, 1 Thessalonians 2:13. He says, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." The apostles, as they were writing these letters that had been preserved for us, were writing the word of God under commission from the Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit whom he provided to them to aid them and preserve them from error in the task.

One more, 2 Peter 3. Believe it or not, I'm giving you the abbreviated version of all these things. 2 Peter 3, "This is now, beloved," chapter 3, verse 1. 2 Peter 3:1, "This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles." This is the commandment of the Lord and Savior. This is the commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ, he says. This is what the apostles were writing, "We have received through the apostles the very word of God, commissioned by the Lord, empowered by the Holy Spirit." But understanding as we've gone through all of this so very quickly, beloved, understand that the authority for all of this, the authority for all of this goes right to the throne of the Son of God, right? This all comes directly from the throne of God. It comes directly from the throne of Jesus Christ. While he was on earth, he affirmed the Old Testament. While he was on earth, he commissioned the New Testament. And after he ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit, he ensured that the ministry of the apostles would deliver to the church a pristine, perfect, inerrant word of God, commensurate in complete measure with the authority of the Old Testament that he affirmed that was written while he was on earth. The Old Testament, you know, he had it in written form while he was on earth and then when he left, the apostles gave us the New Testament with equal authority because it all flowed from the authority of the Son of God. That's why we believe the Bible. That is why we accept it as the word of God.

Now, I'm going to come back, there is more to this, and the question is: how do you and I believe that the Bible is the word of God in distinction from the others in our generation who don't accept it as that? How did we get to that point? I want to deal with that some next week. But let me deal with this in closing. One of the criticisms of this approach, of this biblical approach that we've laid out here tonight, is people will say, "That's a circular argument that you're making. You're reasoning from the Bible in order to prove that the Bible is the word of God." That's a circular reasoning and that's why a lot of the evidential guys don't want to use that argument. They want to speak outside of the Bible in order to prove the authority of the Bible. Well, and the argument is, "What you're saying is I'm right because I say I'm right." You know, how do you get around that? Well, let's think about that for just a second as we close and we'll pick this up more next week. 1. Understand, oh this is so important, especially for young people to understand as

you're framing your worldview and you're determining what you're going to live your life by and the things that are going to guide your thinking and frame the way you interpret all of life, this is critical. When we say that we believe the Bible, remember, we're not appealing to our own authority. We are appealing to an objective authority outside of ourselves that is true and would be true if you and I had never been born. This authority was true before we existed and it's going to be true after we're gone. This is an independent, objective authority that we appeal to, it's not based on our own thinking.

Let me say this, I guess, as we close. It's the very nature when you're trying to deal with the question of ultimate authority, by very nature of ultimate authority is that there isn't something higher that you can appeal to to vindicate it. Ultimate authority is the final authority, and in reality, in objective reality, Jesus Christ is the final authority and we can't appeal to human history to add to his authority and to verify him by a lesser means. Christ himself is far above all authority and so when we appeal to him and say, "I believe the Bible because this is how Christ believed the Bible," we're appealing to authority that is outside of ourselves and there is no higher authority to appeal to. And the result of that is that when we read the word of God, it is self-authenticating in the sense that it reads and it commands itself to the conscience as being the true word of God; it needs nothing else to vindicate or to verify its authority. A modern writer says this, he says, quote, "God speaks in the words of the Bible in such a manner as to remove all doubt as to its divine origin, character, and authority. In the final analysis, only God can be an adequate witness to himself. All other testimonies such as historical evidence or philosophical deduction, can at best possess only secondary value." When we appeal, when we say we believe the word of God, why do we believe the word of God? We believe because of Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone has the authority and the position to give testimony to his own word. There is no one higher to go to. There is not a Supreme Court above Christ. He is the supreme court and that's why we believe the Bible. We believe the Bible because our teacher and Lord has spoken. We believe in response to his work and what he has revealed to us. That's why we believe the Bible.

Next week, we'll bring the Holy Spirit into the discussion and expand on this a little bit more, but it's already way beyond our closing time.

*Father, we thank you for these wonderful truths and we thank you for our Lord Jesus Christ who is our authority, who is the reason that we believe. And Father, as we look to next week and what we'll say next week, we just ask you to prepare our hearts and to view these things as you do, Father. We're not so concerned about whether unsaved men would appreciate our logic and the way that we approach this issue, what we really want, Lord, is to think like you do and to approach it as you do, and to give the authority where it belongs, and to rest our trust and confidence in something unshakable, not what we think but what our Lord has done and said and revealed. That's where we rest our confidence and that means that we can know it for certain because we're taking it from an authority that is certain, our Lord Jesus Christ. So we thank you for that and pray that you would help us process these things in a way that would make us more biblical in our thinking, and thereby make us more effective in our Christian living until you call us home. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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