

# Why Do We Believe the Bible?

*What Does the Bible Teach?*

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## **Truth Community Fellowship**

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It's a great year that lies ahead for our church. I have no hesitation in saying that and I have no fear of being stoned for a false prophet if that does not come true because I believe that it's most certainly going to come true. This is a great year of 2014 that lies ahead of us. As most of you know, we just this past week closed on the purchase of a new facility in eastern Cincinnati about 30 miles up the road from here and that will become our permanent church home and that's going to open up all kinds of avenues of ministry for us, opportunities to be together that we don't currently have when we are without our own facility and so there's that physical dimension to what lies ahead. That's going to be wonderful.

Even more important is that what's ahead for us in 2014 is making significant strides toward becoming a true New Testament church. As I've said a few times over these first two years, we've deliberately called ourselves a fellowship because there are certain aspects to the New Testament church, a New Testament local church that we weren't prepared yet to lay claim to. For the longest time, we didn't have established leadership; we didn't have elders established. We have no formal membership and things of that nature and so we're coming together now, we now have elders and we are soon going to be, probably within the next several months, will be establishing a process by which you who share our convictions will be able to publicly identify with Truth Community and we will, at that time, go from being a fellowship to being a church in the fullest New Testament sense of that term. As we go along, the significance of that will be explained in greater detail.

But one of the key things about being a New Testament local church is to understand what it is that this church believes, to understand what a church believes. We have to have something that we stand for. We have to know what it is that we believe what our convictions are; what it is that we would shed blood over; what it is that we are committed to at the cost of everything else. What I plan to do starting today and over the next 2-3 months is we're going to have a series of messages that explain exactly what it is that Truth Community teaches. What do we teach? And we're going to answer that question in some detail over the coming few months and I'm very excited to be able to do this. We're going to cover a sweep of teaching, a sweep of doctrine, that is going to make it plain exactly what our convictions are, what you can count on this church standing for, teaching and what it is that we believe and that is necessary so that those who would come and consider membership at Truth Community would be able to say, "Ah, this church believes what I believe. I understand. I believe what this church teaches and I want to associate myself with it. I want to be committed to a body of believers that upholds what I myself believe." At the same time, it's an opportunity for if there are any such like what I'm about to describe, it's an opportunity for them to say, "That's not where I'm at. Those aren't my convictions." Well, that's okay, it just means that someone like that would want to find a different place to worship because we believe what we believe, this is what we stand for and it gives everybody, forgive this legal term but sometimes I can't help myself, it gives everybody an opportunity for informed consent to say, "I understand what this church believes. I want to commit myself to it." Or, "That's not where I'm at. I'm not interested. I think I'll go someplace else." No hard feelings. This is a voluntary thing that we're doing but we're committed to the truth of Scripture.

So, what we're going to do over these next 2-3 months is we're going to do a series of stand-alone messages that answer very strategic questions about the Christian faith so that it's very clear and as we answer these questions, what's going to happen is that there's going to be categories in our minds that we are able to establish. It's almost like a miniature catechism in one sense that we're doing to ask crucial questions and then answer them. Today, we have the most foundational question of them all to start ourselves off with in this series: what does Truth Community teach? We're going to answer this question this morning: why do we believe the Bible? Why do we believe the Bible at Truth Community Fellowship, soon to be Truth Community Church? It's obvious that we do. We structure our whole worship service around it. We give twice the time to the teaching of God's word than we do to everything else combined. The Bible is central to what we do and it always will be but why is that? Why the prominent place for the 66 books of Scripture at Truth Community? Why do we believe the Bible? No question is more fundamental than that because what we believe about God, what we believe about sin, what we believe about salvation is all found in the Scriptures, the question is why do we believe that? Why the attention to a book that was completed some 2,000 years ago and parts of which were written 3,500 years ago?

If you think about it, this is completely counter-cultural to do this because in the areas that drive our lives elsewhere: in science, in technology, in medicine, we are driven by the newest and latest thing. It's the newest and latest thing that is considered the most attractive thing, the thing that gets the most attention. I mean, how many of you are wearing the same clothes today that you were wearing ten years ago? We just turned things over in the search of something new. Things wear out and so when we come to the Scriptures and preach a book of 2,000 years of age, we'd better have a good reason to do so. We'd better understand why it is that we give prominence to this as opposed to the latest theory and the latest philosophy from the latest self-appointed expert at an Ivy League school. Why do we believe the Bible? Why do we go back there again and again and again? Well, we're going to answer that question today and I am extremely excited to do this. Much of what I have to say are things that I said earlier about a year ago in one of our mid-week Bible studies and some of you were there for this, but this is too important to leave it tucked away in a Thursday study that maybe 40-50 people were in attendance at. This drives our church and so it was important to me and it's important for the life of our body to bring these things front and center on a Sunday morning and make it the cornerstone of what we're doing here in this series. Why do we believe the Bible?

Now, most of us are used to an evidential approach to defending the authority of the Bible even if we didn't know to call it that. An evidential approach points to certain things and aspects about the Bible and its influence that are used and has been traditionally been used to establish the probability that the Bible is God's word and that it is true and so you will hear people talk about, for example, the indestructibility of the Bible and they will rightfully point to church history and say that this book has withstood the vicious attacks of its enemies, that it has withstood from the days of the Roman Empire efforts to persecute the church and to literally destroy every copy of Scripture that was in existence, to eradicate it from the face of the earth. Yet, those men failed. Communist-dominated countries were unable to extinguish the Scriptures and found instead that their system of government collapsed while the Bible stood firm. People would say that's evidence that the Bible is the word of God, that it has power and there is truth to that argument. Others would say, some of the same men will say, "Look at the character of the Bible. Consider the fact that the Bible has this remarkable unity in what it teaches, in its system of doctrine, in its system of ethics. It has this remarkable unity even though it was written in human terms by 40 different men over a period of 1,500 years. There is this unity that is inexplicable over the culture and chronology of time unless this book came from God. That's an impressive trait of the Scriptures. We agree with that. We affirm that.

Still another avenue of support of the authority of Scripture is people will talk about the influence of the Bible. They say the Bible has produced social reform and changed nations and changed lives. Surely, this power over the course of time proves that the Bible is God's revelation and you look at things and you say, "Yeah, that makes sense." Do you know what the problem is with that particular argument? Do a search online for proofs of the inspiration of the Koran and you'll find that they make the exact same argument about the Koran and about its powerful influence on culture. That argument isn't as strong or as good as it might seem on first glance. That will lead you into supporting a completely Satanic system of religion if you're not careful but that's what's been used traditionally over time: the Bible is indestructible, the Bible has this organic unity that is inexplicable, there is this influence of the Bible.

Others will point to the realm of fulfilled prophecy and say that only God can reveal the future and the many fulfilled prophecies from the Old Testament to the New about Christ and the nations, these prophecies have been fulfilled and that proves that it expresses divine revelation. We would agree with that. That's a legitimate supporting evidence of the truthfulness of Scripture but here's the problem with all of that, here's the problem with all of that is that all of those arguments individually and taken together lack final authority. They lack a compelling final authority about them. Even the well-know author Josh McDowell who has done so much in the realm of this type of apologetics said this and I quote, he said, "This does not prove the Bible is the word of God but it shows that the Bible is unique." Think about that. Think about what that says. Why do we believe the Bible? Why do we believe that the Bible is the word of God? That is a stupendous, magnificent claim to make and are we saying that the best that we can do is make a probability argument in its favor? Is that worthy of the eternal God? Is that worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ who says, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth"? Is the best that we can do is to make a probability argument?

You see, these observations and others like them are helpful but they're not final and what you have to understand is this, here at Truth Community and the truth of the word of God is this: we are not saying that the Bible is probably true. That is not our position at all. We are saying that the Bible is inerrant. We are saying that it is absolutely the word of God. That is indisputably true and that unbelief in that principle is an act of sin. The word of God has complete authority and the 66 books of the Bible are absolutely the word of God as a truth to be upheld and proclaimed without hesitation or qualification. How can you say that? I was born in 1961. Who am I to say something like that? Who are we as a church to make such a sweeping exclusive truth claim that immediately preempts any challenges to the contrary? How can we speak in such absolute terms and say without hesitation or qualification that the Bible is the word of God? We'd better have a good answer to that because we are saying that when we preach the gospel, when we proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Savior of sinners based on what Scripture says, we are saying that what the Bible teaches is the difference between eternal heaven and eternal hell, that those who resist and reject the message about Christ are turning away their only hope of salvation and condemning themselves to eternal perdition. If we're going to say something like that, it better be more than a personal opinion. If we're going to teach an hour Sunday-by-Sunday, we'd better have a good reason to do so. We'd better be trembling, as it were, under the authority of this word if we're going to say things like that.

Not only that, we need to know it for our own spiritual selves, for our own spiritual life. When doubts and temptations come, when trials hit us hard, where is it that we find a rock upon which we can stand? Where is it that we can find the certainty that gives us confidence as we look at the impending of bed of death that is certain to come to each one of us? Where is it that we turn? Where is it that we turn when we hear of wars and rumors of war? Where is it that we turn when we see society supposedly collapsing around us? Where do we find hope? Where do we find confidence? We say it's in the word of God, well listen, it makes all the difference in the world as to whether we say that this is the word of God and in our hearts we say, "Yes it is and I know why, I believe that," versus saying, "This is the word of God and I sure hope I'm right because if I'm wrong, this is a real waste of time."

Why do we believe the Bible? I'm going to give you two words that answer that question for all time. Two words that tell you why we believe the Bible. Three syllables that explain it beyond all doubt. Those two words are: Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is why we believe the Bible and I'm going to spend the next 40 minutes or so explaining that and showing you why that is indisputably true. Jesus Christ is why we believe the Bible. Now, let me deal right up front with an objection that someone would make to that statement. "You say Jesus Christ, well, hold on a second, you know about Christ from the Bible itself. Isn't that a circular argument that you're making? You're pointing to your own authority to establish its own authority. The authority of what you say is based on the authority of the book that you say is authoritative. You're just running around in circles. This is not a legitimate way to argue." And it might seem presumptuous to do that. Someone might think mistakenly that we're simply saying, "I'm right because I'm right." That's not the case here. This is completely different.

Bruce Milne, a theologian who's written a very helpful book called "Know the Truth," says this and you need to listen to this very carefully and understand what's going on here because we're talking about the

issue of establishing final authority. How is it that we know what is true? What is ultimate authority? Anybody who makes a truth claim has a similar problem and Bruce Milne says this and I quote, he says, "We note the difficulty of establishing a claim to ultimate authority except by reference to itself. Any other authority summoned to support our final authority would itself become the ultimate authority." Continuing on the quote he says, "In the final analysis, only God can be an adequate witness to himself. All other testimony such as historical evidence or philosophical deduction can at best possess only secondary value."

You can't appeal to the course of history to establish ultimate authority. You can't bring the events of men to bear to establish God's testimony to himself. Only God is qualified. Only God has the measure of omniscience necessary to testify to himself. Men cannot testify with final authority to the reality of God or his authoritative book. We need something that transcends the human race if we're going to have a testimony that goes to a transcendent God. I was born in 1961. I'm not qualified. I wasn't there when time began. I wasn't there when Christ suffered on the cross. I wasn't there. We're all in a position of being dependent upon the witness of someone else. The whole concept of ultimate authority in itself is enough to humble us to realize that we need something outside of ourselves. It's enough for you to say, "Well, I think such-and-such." As soon as someone says, "Well, I think science is better" or "I think this is better. I think what I feel is better," you're simply setting yourself up as the final authority because it all comes down to what you think. You can't argue authority that way. Those of us who have our breath in our nostrils who are a vapor in the wind, a puff of smoke soon to be gone from existence? Our thoughts are going to be the measure of final absolute truth? Please.

This is humbling. This is urgent. You see, the only way that you can get to the bottom of this issue is to ask: who's the final authority? Who is it that knows? Who is it that has that position? I'm going to give you three points this morning to help you understand this and this is where we start with point 1. is that Jesus is the supreme authority. Jesus is the final authority. Now, I invite you to turn to the gospel of John. We're going to survey several different biblical texts here this morning. We're going to start in the gospel of John 13 and let me say this as well as you're turning there and it's our intention here in this series and even in this particular message: for us to thrive as Christians, for us to be firm, to grow, to honor God and Christ by honoring his word, we have to understand our own position. It's not our goal, it's not our desire, it's not our intention here this morning to somehow make this argument, to make these truths something that an unbeliever will accept. That's not the point. We're not trying to enter into their worldview and get something that they would agree to. They're hostile to the truth. That's not our goal. It's not our intention to say, "This is something that every unbeliever is going to agree to," that's not what we're trying to do here this morning. What we're doing here this morning is we're saying, "What has God said in his word," and we want to understand our own position. We want to understand our own worldview, as it were. We want to understand what Scripture says and then reason out from there. You start with the truth, not with how unbelievers will process the truth. That's what we're going to do here this morning.

Point 1: Jesus is the final authority. John 13:13, Jesus said, "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am." Beloved, there is something really vital that is buried in that verse. We call Christ "Lord." You're not a Christian if you don't believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, supreme God over all, well, understand something really important: Christ is our Lord, he's Lord over our conduct. We kind of get that. We understand that but Christ is also our teacher. He is our authoritative teacher. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7, Jesus' finishing words and it says that "the crowd was astonished at his teaching because he taught them not as the Scribes did but he taught as one having authority." You see, when Jesus teaches, he teaches as one having absolute authority. He is our teacher. He has authority as our teacher and that means this: that our responsibility as Christians is not only to line up our conduct with what he tells us to do but it is our responsibility as Christians to line up the way that we think under the way that he teaches us. He is Lord over our thoughts. He is Lord over our philosophies. He is Lord over our arguments. Everything that we do must be brought into subjection, brought under the authority of Jesus Christ and that includes the way that we think about ultimate authority. What the standard of truth is. We don't rely on our own judgment. We realize though sometimes we forget to tie our shoes; we forget to turn the oven on or off; we forget and leave our drinks on top of the car and drive away. We do all kinds of silly little things and details like that that are a manifestation of our human weakness before you even get to the fact that our minds are impaired by sin. If we can't remember to tie our shoes, if we forget to lock the door when we leave for church – sorry to plant that thought in your mind – if we can't do little things like that to

perfection, how in the name – I say it reverently – how in the name of God are we going to be fit to judge issues of ultimate truth that so completely transcend our existence?

We need an outside authority and Jesus Christ is our teacher. He is the one to whom we look for truth. He said in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” He said in John 17:17 praying to his Father, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” Jesus knows and he's our teacher and so we ask him in dependence, “Lord, I am so weak and frail and sinful. I am mortal. Would you make plain what truth is?” And don't you think that if Christ went to all of the trouble to leave heaven in order to achieve the Incarnation for the sake of purchasing our redemption on the cross, don't you think that he would somehow manage to communicate to the human race an authoritative word of truth that could be relied on absolutely without resorting to probability arguments? Of course. Of course. Of course. He's our teacher and our Lord and so we look to him.

Now, having said that, that's our Christian position. Let's remember what Scripture says about him. Turn over to Ephesians 1, just after Corinthians and Galatians. Ephesians 1 and here is where, beloved, you have to know your own position. This is where Truth Community gets off in looking to Christ for final authority. Ephesians 1:18. Paul is praying for those who were his readers and he says, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.” He says, “I understand that you kind of grope around in darkness without divine help so I'm praying that God would help you. I'm praying that your eyes would be opened, that you would understand.” You know, we talk about, “Oh, I see the answer to that math problem.” He's not talking about literal physical sight, he's talking about the understanding of the mind. He says, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened 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,” verse 19, “and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.” There it is, “those who believe.” This is our position. This is what belongs to us. This is the defining moment of reality for us is what Paul is praying about right here. It says, “These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ.” Ah-ha, our teacher and Lord here. What does he have to say about Christ here? “When He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,” watch this, verse 21, “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.”

The magnificence of that statement about who Christ is has massive implications for what we're talking about here this morning. Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone stands in a position of unparalleled, unapproachable authority. He is the authority on truth. He is the authority on the universe. He is the authority on the human heart. And so when it comes to asking the question why do we believe the Bible, understand this, beloved, we go to Christ realizing that there is no higher authority than him by which we can know the truth about the Bible. Christ alone is the authority. And you know, incidentally, just by common thinking, have you ever stopped to think that the unique authority of Christ is expressed in the fact that we measure time by him? We're 2,014 AD, in the year of our Lord AD. He's the dividing line of time: before Christ and after Christ. I know that academics are trying to erase that from common parlance but that's their problem not ours. We measure time by this one. We go and we find that his body is not in his tomb. This man who defines time. This man who transcended death has more than adequately expressed to us his authority to tell us what is true and so when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, we're coming to the best, the highest, the surest, the most infallible authority, the only infallible authority that there is and we pity those who reject his authority because we understand that they are in darkness. We pity those who reject the authority of Christ and presume to speak on matters of absolute truth because we understand that they are mere blind guides leading blind men into the pit. We're not going to be intimidated into silence by such ones. We're not going to be confused or deceived by such false philosophies. We transcend it all because we go to Christ and say, “What did he say?”

You see, beloved, talking to you as believers in Christ, knowing that some of you still need to come to him for salvation, knowing that some of you are still in that darkness but speaking as a whole, speaking as a group to those who are Christians, building you up, not worrying about what the nay-sayers say, understand this, beloved: when we ask the question, “Why do we believe the Bible,” we do not start with, “What do I think about the Bible? How does it seem to me?” The truth of Scripture should be explained or defended because as soon as you say that, as soon as you approach it that way even if you're not consciously thinking

that way, you're saying, "What do I think?" you're putting yourself in the place of authority. That's not our place. We're not the teacher. We're not the Lord. We want to go and ask him and let that settle it for us because Jesus Christ is the supreme authority.

What did Jesus say? John 10:35, Jesus said, "The Scripture cannot be broken." The one who created the universe says this word cannot be violated. That establishes its authority. What else did Jesus say? Look at the book of Matthew 5. I alluded briefly to the Sermon on the Mount. Somewhere, I trust in the future of Truth Community, is a lengthy series on the Sermon on the Mount. I can't wait to get there but it's just not the right time yet but in Matthew 5:17, Jesus is looking at the whole corpus of literature that we know as the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible with little bits of Aramaic sprinkled in there as well. Here he is, the Son of God in human flesh on earth. Ha, that would have been a great moment to see. What did he say? He started teaching and was at variance with what their current Scribes were saying and they wondered if maybe Jesus was trying to teach something different from their authoritative Scriptures and he addresses that concern in verse 17 when he says, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you," notice how he speaks on his own first person singular authority, "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."

Scripture can't be broken. When he talks about the smallest letter or stroke of the law, he's talking about the equivalent of our dotting an i or crossing a t. Scripture is so perfect, it is so absolute in its authority, it is so absolute in its certainty that there won't be a single t that's left uncrossed from everything that God has said. Not one. Not one. That's what Jesus said. This one who is high above all authority, not only now but in all the ages to come, says, "This is what's true about Scripture, not a bit of it is going to be violated." Whoa.

Look over at a separate gospel in Luke 24. I want you to see these passages with your own eyes and not just take my word for it. If we were going to state the title of this message differently, it could be "Jesus teaches about the authority of the Bible." We could have defined it that way but that would have messed up the question format I wanted to use so we can't do that. Luke 24:44. This is after his resurrection, shortly before his ascension back into heaven from whence he came. He's speaking to disciples and he says in verse 44, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you." Look again, beloved, look at the first person singular, "My words; what I spoke; I was with you." It's all about his authority. He's not appealing to somebody else to independently verify him. He doesn't need it. He stands alone in unchallenged supremacy as he speaks these magnificent words and he said, "This is what I said to you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." There is a divine necessity is what the word means. There is a divine certainty. It is absolutely necessary and cannot deviate from the fact that everything that was written about Christ in the law of Moses, in the writings and in the Psalms would be fulfilled to perfection. He says it has to be that way and it has to be that way, Jesus says, because I said so. That is breath-taking authority. That's what our authority said about the Scriptures.

Jesus is *the* final authority. There is no other. There is no one in the realm of the realm of the realm of the realm. He stands alone in perfect authority over all things including what the truth is and including in the way that we are to view Scripture and so we look to Christ and say, "What did Jesus say about this book?" And he said, "Perfect, absolute fulfillment down to crossing the t and dotting the i. There won't be anything missing." That's the way that God designed it. It must be this way. That's what the final authority says. Think about it. Think about it in light of the supremacy of Christ and ask yourself this question: Jesus has spoken and declared what is true about the word of God, what are we going to do? What are we going to do? Are we going to go to some assistant professor of history at Harvard and let him contradict Christ? Are we going to let some waffling seminary professor cause us to undermine our confidence in the word of God? No. No. No. Listen: every one of them, secular or in the so-called realm of Christianity, every one of them has an appointment with destiny whereby, according to Philippians 2, they themselves will bow the knee to Christ and say that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Christ had authority before time began, he has authority now, and every living man who has ever lived will bow before him and say, "Yes, you are Lord."

We get to say it, as it were, voluntarily now, they'll say it under the compulsion of force but the point for us as we contemplate the authority of Scripture and why we believe the Bible is that this one to whom all will bow has said the Scripture cannot be broken, the Scripture must be fulfilled, not a letter will pass away. That settles it. We could close in prayer right here but I've got a lot more in my notes to go. You see, that's the broad look at it. That's enough but blessed be God that as you pursue the study of the Scripture, as you pursue the words of Christ, you can understand that you can break it into details, that you can see this with even greater clarity and so we said, first of all, Jesus is the final authority, now we say, okay, we have in our English Bibles what we call the Old and the New Testament. Did Jesus say anything about them in particular or was it just a general statement that he made? Point 2: Jesus affirmed the Old Testament. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament. When we think about those 39 books, again in the English Bible, the 39 books of the English Bible and we say what about the content therein? There's some weird stuff in there, you could say, speaking as a foolish one. There are some unusual things that are completely contradictory to conventional wisdom of today.

What did Jesus say about that? Jesus affirmed the Old Testament by which we mean, first of all, Jesus consistently treated Old Testament narratives as historical fact. He treated Old Testament history as time and space accurate historical reports and he did it, beloved, not only on non-controversial points, he did it on the things that are most vocally rejected today. In Matthew 12, he affirmed that Jonah was swallowed by a fish. In Matthew 19, he affirmed the biblical account of creation: six days, 24 hours. In Matthew 24, he affirmed the account of Noah and a worldwide flood. Jesus affirmed the historicity of the Old Testament without apology, without qualification. It was just evidently woven through his understanding that this Old Testament was true, accurate in all that it said. He affirmed the Old Testament.

I just listed out three little things there quickly without even having you turn there. Elsewhere during his ministry recorded for us in the four gospels, Jesus affirmed the historicity of Adam, the historicity of Abel, Abraham, Sodom and Gomorrah, Isaac and Jacob, the wilderness serpent, King David, King Solomon, Elijah, Elisha and many others. You can't understand the teaching of Jesus at all without understanding that he presumed the accuracy of the Old Testament. He took them as straight-forward or authoritative statements of fact.

Well look, beloved, those of us that name the name of Christ, those of you that name the name Christian and say, "I'm a Christians," he is our teacher. He is our Lord. We believe what he said. If Jesus affirms creation, Noah, Jonah, all points in between, I agree too. I want to line myself up with him. I'm not going to think independently. I'm not going to question his judgment on these things. I'm not going to think outside the realm of his authority. I'm not going to entertain his legitimate truth claims that which would contradict the one who alone is authority over all. That's the way we have to think. That, beloved, is why we believe the Bible. That's why we believe the historicity of the Old Testament. We weren't there to verify with our own eyes but Christ was. Christ said it's true. There's nothing left to be said.

Furthermore, as we consider the Old Testament, let's talk about this for just a second. Just a second. People who want to give lip-service to Jesus have always praised him for his ethical teaching, "Oh, he teaches such an ethic of love and it's so good," and "Oh, you know, I don't believe in him as Lord and I think that the stories of the Old Testament are silly but at least his ethical teaching is something that we could all agree on." Well, do you know what? Jesus' ethical teaching also came from the Old Testament. It was rooted in the Old Testament. When he said to love God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind, he was quoting out of Deuteronomy. When he said to love your neighbor as yourself, he's quoting out of Leviticus. When he tells us to honor our fathers and mothers, he's quoting out of Exodus. On and on it goes, again, just representative samples to help you see that even the ethics that the critics will try to give lip-service to is rooted in his view of the Old Testament. He quoted it as authoritative, as binding.

So, his history and his ethics came from the Old Testament and he affirmed it without hesitation. Jesus Christ clearly affirmed the authority of the Old Testament during his earthly ministry so watch this, this is how we have to think: God is the final authority. He is the ruler over all and Jesus Christ is God himself in human flesh. By his authority, he spoke and inspired the writers of the Old Testament canon. While he was here on earth, he looked back at the Old Testament and said, "True. True. Authoritative. Right. Absolute." We see in the person of Christ an affirmation of the Old Testament. A man cannot call himself a follower

of Christ and then adopt an attitude toward the Old Testament that is hostile to the one that he himself had. This is the Christian position, the absolute authority of the Old Testament based on the testimony of Christ himself.

Now, what about the New Testament? This is a little bit of a different article. It's a little different argumentation because, think about it, when Christ ascended into heaven from whence he reigns at the right hand of the Father and from whence he is coming back, when he ascended the New Testament had not been written. How do we know what he thinks about the New Testament which chronologically happened after he was gone? Is there a word from him about that? The answer is: yes it is. This is our third and final point this morning. Jesus commissioned the New Testament. He commissioned the New Testament by which we mean this: Jesus pre-authenticated the New Testament during his ministry. Now, I want you to follow me here. We're talking about the very foundation of the eternal well-being of our souls here, that's why we spend time on it. We can't treat this lightly. You see, when Jesus was here the Old Testament was done and, as it were, he laid hands on it and affirmed it in his life and ministry. With the New Testament it's different. From his standpoint of his earthly life, it was still yet to come but understand this: with equal authority, just as he laid hands on the Old Testament, he laid hands on the New Testament as well. It was just going to be finished after he rose and I'm going to show you this.

How did Jesus commission the New Testament? I'm going to give you three subpoints here and they'll go pretty quickly. First of all, he prepared for its writing. He prepared for the writing of the New Testament. Go back to the gospel of John, chapter 14. Oh, this is so incredibly precious. In John 14:26, Jesus is speaking to his disciples in the Upper Room and he said, he makes a promise to them. In verse 25 he says, "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you." I have said these things to you while I'm here on earth with you, but then he looks to the future and he says, "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." He promises them supernatural enablement from the third person of the Trinity to help them write and record and remember everything that he said during his earthly ministry.

Look over at John 15. He says, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father," notice that he sends the Spirit with equal authority with God the Father himself. It's a statement of deity. "That 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," these disciples, those gathered in the upper room with him, "you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning."

One more, John 16:12, 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." You see, what he's saying here is that these disciples are going to be the beneficiaries of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is going to take the things of Christ and make it known to them and help them in a way that will let them record the work and ministry of Christ in a way that is without error and with perfect accuracy reflects what Jesus taught and what Jesus did. He is pre-authenticating the New Testament. He is preparing the way that his chosen apostles would be able to accurately write what needed to be said about Christ for all generations to come. That is a gift of Christ to us, his church that he's given to us. He commissioned the disciples. He promised and sent the Holy Spirit for their work.

Secondly, it wasn't just the sending of the Spirit but he specifically commissioned the apostles for this task. He commissioned the apostles. Go back to Matthew 28 and, again, you're going to see in this familiar passage the authority of Christ put on full display. Oh, it's about his authority, beloved, it's about trusting him, believing him based on his own word. Matthew 28:18, "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,' here it is, "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." He begins with a statement of his complete authority and says, "Go and teach and as you're teaching, remember that I'm with you even to the end of the age." And so, these apostles who delivered the New Testament to us were writing under the authority of Christ and with the aiding, helping, abetting presence



of Christ as well. When we read the New Testament, when we read what the apostles or their close associates recorded for us, we are reading what Jesus told them to do. He said, "Go and teach." It wasn't just their verbal teaching, it was their written ministry which is now recorded for us in the New Testament. Jesus told them to do that. They wrote under the authority of Christ.

They wrote with the aid of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent and when it was done, what did the disciples think about their own teaching ministry? Look back at 1 Thessalonians. I want to show you a couple of passages here before we wrap up. By the way, in this series that we're doing over the next couple of months, I completely understand that I can't answer every relevant question in a one-time message like this. We're just trying to lay down markers here. We're trying to build a framework, as it were, and we'll go in and we'll paint the colors in that framework in days still further to come. We're just trying to see very basic things right now and nothing is more basic or fundamental than the authority of Christ and the authority of his word.

1 Thessalonians 2:13, the Apostle Paul is writing to the church in Thessalonica and notice what 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." He says, "Yeah, I was a human instrument in what was being said but it was the word of God coming through me as an apostle of Jesus Christ." Now listen – listen – listen – listen – he is commending that church at Thessalonica for the fact that they received the word of God with a receptive ear. Notice what he commends them for. He says, "I commend you. I thank God because you accepted it as the word of God." When you and I open up the Bible, when we open up the Bible, pick a spot and start reading it and we receive it as the authoritative word of God, when we believe it, we are putting ourselves in that same position as the Thessalonians were doing, we are accepting it as the word of God. This is not the word of man, it is the word of God inspired through the pens of men but ultimately what we read is the word of God and, therefore, has authority and that, beloved, is why we believe it. It's on the authority of Christ. He said that he was going to do this. He commissioned particular men to do it. They did it. He was with them. The result is we have an authoritative word.

One last passage to see it from another apostle's perspective. 2 Peter 3:1, he says, "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," watch this, "the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles." The apostles spoke in the Scriptures but what they were writing was the commandment of the Lord and they had a unique, non-repeatable, non-transferrable authority to write on behalf of Christ because he commissioned them to do just that.

Now let me wrap this up for you. A lot of heavy material in some ways here this morning. I can't believe the time is gone. I can't believe it. I'm afraid that I pushed the button up here that controls the clock and advanced it without knowing it. I don't want to stop because this is so important. Why do we believe the Bible? Because Christ is our authority. He is our Lord. He is our Lord. He is our God. He is our boss. And Christ has affirmed the truthfulness and authority of both the Old and the New Testament and, beloved, here is where it all comes down to, here's where it all comes down to: we trust Christ as the final judge of truth more than we trust our own judgment. We rest our hope in his work for our salvation; we rest our confidence about truth in his judgment about what is true and he's made it clear. In general and in detail, he has made it clear. He established the authority of Scripture during his earthly ministry.

Beloved, talking about principles here and not trying to do anything else: for someone to reject the authority of the Bible is a great culpable sin against him. For someone to dismiss or ignore the authority of the Bible, to not build your life around the Bible is a great, great sin against Christ. If we're Christians, we gratefully, joyfully believe the Bible. What I want you to see from everything that we've said today is that if we want Christ, as it were, as our Lord and as our Savior, bound up with that is his view of the authority of Scripture. You can't separate the two. It's the word of God written and Incarnate and they are one unit, they are of one cloth.

You believe the Bible, don't you? At Truth Community, we do. That's what we base everything on. That's what we're going to build our future on is this unshakeable commitment to the unshakeable foundation of

the word of God. Why do we do that? Because Christ said it was true and that settles it forever. Think of the alternative, beloved, as we close. Think of the alternative: for someone to turn away from the Bible leaves them in the helpless position that Peter recognized when Christ asked him, "Are you going to go away with the multitudes too?" in John 6. They had just watched thousands of people walk away because they didn't like what Jesus had to say and Jesus turns to them and says, "You don't want to go away too, do you? Do you want to walk away from me too?" Peter said, "Lord, Lord, to whom would we go? You have words of eternal life and we have come to know and believe that you are the Son of God."

By an act of undeserved mercy on our individual lives, Christ has brought us to that same point where we recognize him as the one true and only sovereign Son of God. We bow before him in glad submission, in willing embrace, not just of the salvation that he offers to everyone who will repent and believe but for the totality of who he is, the totality of what he claimed authority for and that starts with this precious word. It starts with these precious 66 books to which we gladly bend the knee, to which we lovingly bring our lips and kiss the sweetness of the authority and the majesty of this book. Why do we believe the Bible? Two words: Jesus Christ and that settles it for all time. If it's settled in the courts of heaven, that's enough to settle it in the courts of your heart.

Let's pray together.

*Lord, this is such a sweet and precious word but it's precious not just because it comforts us in trial, it's precious not just because it's revealed salvation to us, oh, it's done that and it's done it so magnificently. God, we pray once more again for those who are here that have not received Christ, that are still in their sins and in darkness and we pray that by the sheer power of your might you would do a work in their hearts that would cause them to recognize the sweet authority of this word and to give their lives to the one who affirmed it. Father, let them turn from sin and receive our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal salvation and, Father, make it today. Make it today to be the day of salvation for those, Father, who are still hard-hearted or lukewarm or indifferent or ignorant. Father, open their minds, open their hearts that they might see just like you did for us.*

*Lord Jesus, corporately speaking here this morning as a body of believers, we call you Teacher and Lord and we're right because you are and because you are Master, because you are the authority, because you are our infallible, reliable teacher and we see the deference that you displayed for us, you modeled for us, the authority of the word of God, you believed it, therefore, we believe it too. Lord, for those of us that perhaps have struggled in this, perhaps having had our minds tainted and twisted by secular teaching over the years, I just pray that the same Spirit that inspired the apostles powerfully to write these words in the New Testament would have the same magnificent work of power and illumination on those who struggle who perhaps haven't seen it yet. Father, would you just expand our minds and our understanding and subdue our rebellious hearts that we would embrace this word with the full unreserved vigor that our Lord Jesus Christ himself did. Father, may that mark us individually and may it mark the life of Truth Community Church in the days to come.*

*Lord, where would we go if we turned away from this? You alone have words of eternal life and so we gladly publicly proclaim our belief in your word, our submission to its authority and by your grace, Father, we commit ourselves to uphold and to teach and to defend this great magnificent word as long as you give us strength and breath.*

*Father, we know that there are others who share that commitment elsewhere in the world. We don't claim to be the only ones who do this but we are alone, as it were, in your presence right now and we just ask you to help fulfill that great commitment of this church to your word and we ask you, Father, to send out your word as the rain comes down from heaven and does not return there without causing the earth to bear fruit and sprout, Father, may the going forth of your word from this place, from this body of believers in our corporate and in our individual lives, bear great fruit that would honor the name of Christ that when we stand before you, Father, as those who have been responsible and under the course of your work in this ministry, that we could enter in and see that divine smile that says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Lord, we're living for that one moment to receive that final word of approval and affirmation from you. Help us to that end. We're prone to wander; we're prone to stray. We're weak and finite and*

*sinful even yet, wrestling with our flesh. Every one of us, Lord, it's the nature of the human condition. O God, O God, help us to transcend that remnant of sin that is amongst us and in us that we might be pure vessels for the proclamation of your pure, holy, authoritative word. Lord Jesus, we believe it because we believe you and it's in your name that we pray. Amen.*