

How to Know the Bible Is True

Building a Christian Mind

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I'm quite glad, excited, to be able to deliver this particular message to you here today. We just finished six messages on how to know God exists. It's a part of what our elder Andrew Snelling has called a bigger mega-series on how to build a Christian mind, building a Christian mind that is what we are doing and we spent a half dozen messages establishing how we know that God exists. It's not simply that we assert his existence, we set forth how we know that he exists. And the whole point of this long series that we are engaged in that will last for a few more months, is not simply to explain what we believe but to help you as a Christian, help you as a young person trying to find your way in Christ to know how we know that these things are true; not simply to recite a creed from memory but be able to articulate the reasons that those things in the creeds and confessions are true. And today we turn to a new topic in this series on building a Christian mind, and it is, in some ways, the most critical theme of them all, and the series that we're about to embark on and the title for today's individual message is "How to Know that the Bible Is True." How to know the Bible is true, and there are aspects of this that perhaps you've not recognized and heard before. We're going to look at the traditional way that this has been defended over prior decades perhaps, and then look at what I believe is a far more effective and a far more biblical way to establish how we know that the Bible is true.

There is hardly a question that could be more significant in building a Christian mind. You know, you've been around us, most of you have been around us long enough to know that we look to the Bible as our authority. We state that the Bible alone is where God has spoken. We affirm the principle of Sola Scriptura and we do so for good reason. But how do we know that the Bible is true? On what authority, here's the question, on what authority do we receive the truth claims of the Bible? That is essential, a vital, vital question to know the answer to, and it's so simple that you'll say, "I should have seen that all along," it's so clear and yet it's been so obscured by well-meaning teachers that you wonder, "Well, you know, where has this been in the past?" Well, I want to take you, first of all, as a kind of an introductory matter, I want to take you to a few different passages of Scripture just to show that the Bible claims itself to be the word of God.

If you would start back in the Old Testament book of 2 Samuel. 2 Samuel as we read about the life of David, and here in 2 Samuel 23, we are coming to the end of David's life

after God has given him deliverance from all of his enemies, and Scripture records the final written words of David here in 2 Samuel 23, and there's a very critical text that is found at the start here. In 2 Samuel 23:1 we read, "Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel." And as you read through the 150 Psalms, you find 73 of them are ascribed to King David, and what David says in what follows there in verse 2 is what I want to point your attention to, he says, this one who wrote such large portions of the word of God that we still have today, he says, "The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue." And there you see the aspect of the dual authorship, you might say, of Scripture. It is the word of God, the Spirit of the Lord speaking through David, the word of God was put on his human tongue to express. And so God spoke through human authors. He used their pens. He used their tongues. He worked through their personalities in order to record his word for all time in written form to those that would pick up and read.

In like manner, the Apostle Paul, if you would turn to the book of 1 Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians in your New Testament, chapter 2. 1 Thessalonians 2, and I'm going to take a little bit of time to turn to the specific texts today to point them to you. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 we read this, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers." Paul said, "We spoke to you but you perceived it rightly." This was not the word of man that was coming to you through Paul's apostolic ministry. This was the very word of God that was being spoken as Paul ministered to them during his earthly apostolic ministry.

Now, in perhaps a more familiar passage, if you'll turn a few pages to the right in your Bibles, 2 Timothy 3, we read this, 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 we read that, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." And if you look back up at verse 15 where I could have started, Paul reminds Timothy that "from childhood," Timothy, "you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." These writings that are sacred, they are from God, they are breathed out in their manifestation from God by the Spirit through the human author, Scripture says over and over again this is the word of God.

One final passage that I want to bring to your attention. Again, we're just in an introduction here. In 2 Peter 1 and we'll come back to some of these texts in future messages, 2 Peter, 2 Peter 1, beginning in verse 19. Peter had just alluded to the fact that he was on the Mount of Transfiguration when the Lord displayed his glory in such great power to Peter and the other two that were with them at the time, and he says in verse 17, "when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain." But look at what Peter says, this majestic experience of seeing the Lord

transfigured and seeing an unveiling of the Shekinah glory of God before their very eyes, Peter looks to the written word and says that we have something that's even more firmly established than an experience like that. In verse 19 he says, "we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all," notice the priority that Peter places on what is about to follow. This is a matter of first principle. This is what you need to know first of all, he says, "that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." You see Peter saying over a thousand years after David expressing the same concept with different words. David said, "His word is on my tongue." Peter says the writers of Scripture spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

And so we find throughout Scripture and you could spend, you know, you could spend weeks looking at this theme through Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible and we did a series of messages on Psalm 119 as we were going through the Psalms that you can look to, what the word of God is, what it does, what it requires. You know, this is embedded deeply in the themes of Scripture. We're only touching on the surface of it here this morning. The point is for today is that Scripture claims to be the word of God. Now that has far reaching ramifications. The fact that it is the word of God, we reason like this, God is true. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no one comes to the Father except through me." In the book of Titus we read that it is impossible for God to lie. Truth is such an intrinsic part of his essence that it is impossible for him to lie. That means that it is impossible for Scripture to lie to us. It is impossible for Scripture, as the word of God, to be wrong, to be mistaken in anything that it affirms. God is true therefore what he speaks is true. Scripture is his word therefore what Scripture speaks is true. And there are places in Scripture where you can see where Scripture interchangeably uses phrases like "God says, Scripture says," so that the word of God is identified with what we have in the written 66 books of the Bible. So crucial to understand that and we will build on this and kind of build it out in construction terms, we'll build this out in messages to come.

For today, we're dealing with a slightly different question, a more preliminary question, you know, an an entryway into all of this. Scripture asserts this and on the testimony of Scripture itself, that is enough in itself for us to accept it as true, to believe it, and beloved, let me just pause here, go on a little bit of an unplanned tangent here that's very important to understand, that what we believe is part of our obedience to God. Obedience is not simply a matter of what we do with our physical flesh and, you know, how we conduct our lives. There is a crucial aspect of the obedience of faith. In some ways the first obedience that we render to God is to believe what he has said. If you do not believe what God has said, if you do not uphold what God has said, you are disobeying him at the most fundamental level. Scripture says that this is the commandment that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you believe him, 1 John 3:23, and that if we do not believe him, we have made God a liar. And so we can't just simply look at this as some kind of incidental matter, what we think about the word of God is essential, it is at the very source of Christian obedience to Christ. We must have clear in our minds that this book is

true, this is God's word, and this alone is God's word, and believe that and affirm it and defend it in our hearts and in our words and in our ministries, whatever the Lord has given to us. This is an essential aspect of Christian obedience to believe this, to know it, to be convinced of it, because to waffle on the truthfulness of God's word, to deny it in different aspects, to undermine it with different critical theories that even so-called evangelical scholarship has embraced, is to commit an act of treachery, an act of treason against the reliability of God and the truthfulness of his own word. It's that important, and what we believe is essential to being a Christian, not simply how we behave.

Now I'm done with that little side tangent there, today, I want to address the question how do we know that the Bible is true? On what authority do we receive that? How do we know to accept that claim? And beloved, again, there is no more fundamental question that you could answer because once you answer this question and you establish it and it's clear in your mind, then the force of the truth of the word of God works its way through everything else in life; everything else through theology, everything else through how to respond to trial, the force of it all is carried through if you know what the fundamental foundation basis is upon which we receive this claim. And is this based on a judgment that we make as we read the word of God, or is there someone else's judgment that we rely on? I'm working on something. I'm working on a project that has been in my mind for 20 some years and I was just looking at it again and, you know, I have to caution you, help you without getting into too much detail to admonish you and to warn you against an over-reliance on experts, self-proclaimed experts on Scripture, those with doctorates and those that have different letters after their names that they are very eager to point out to you and all of that, and as John Knox said toward the end of his life that it is often universities that will do the most to undermine the word of God. And so we have to be mindful of where our authority is, and in our day and age where we love to quote experts on medicine and on politics and all kinds of things, beloved, you need to know where the real authority is. Scholarship, even Christian scholarship is not always faithful to the word of God. In fact, it often is not. I had opportunity to go into academics and I chose not to because I could just see that that was not where the best defense of the word of God could be made. I'm thankful for faithful scholars. I have friends that are faithful scholars, but as a whole, as a pastor, I need to warn you, the flock of God entrusted here, to be careful about where you place your trust and to know exactly where the authority lies and to not be intimidated by men who wave their doctorate certificates who are actually being unfaithful to the word of God.

And so this is of most fundamental importance. What we're about to say depends not a bit, not a whit on me. What we want to do is we want to think God's thoughts after him. How does God view his word? How do we know to receive the 66 books as that which comes from God and therefore is true by definition? Well, I want to start with one approach that we'll call the evidential approach, and then we'll move into the second aspect today of what I believe is the the biblical approach, the better approach, you might say. But the evidential approach is what I want to consider first and help you understand the argument that traditionally, perhaps, has been made in defense of the authority of Scripture. Many of us, including me, were nurtured on these arguments early in our Christian life. I remember back in 1987, what is that, 36 years ago, watching a film series

at Moody Memorial Church in Chicago that had a lot of arguments about which I'm going to allude to here, and at the time it seemed good, it seemed impressive, it also seemed kind of overwhelming to gather all of this stuff and try to remember it all, but this evidential approach considers this, it considers what the proponents of the argument consider to be compelling proofs that surround the Bible. And they look at different historical things, and I'm going to just go quickly through four different arguments, four different lines of argument that you will hear in this regard, and depending on how I go, I'll either quote names or I won't. It's not really that important who says it.

But first of all in the evidential approach, you'll find that this argument says you need to consider the indestructibility of the Bible. The indestructibility of the Bible. And what are they referring to when they say this? Well, I quote from one famous writer along this line who believes that evidence demands a verdict, "The Bible has withstood vicious attacks of its enemies as no other book. Many have tried to burn it, ban it, and outlaw it from the days of Roman emperors to communist dominated countries." So the argument is that men have tried to destroy this book, the book has survived and therefore that gives us evidence that it is somehow associated with God. Another writer says this, "The fact of the indestructibility of the Bible strongly suggests that it is the embodiment of divine revelation." And so the Bible has survived many attacks against it and the fact that it survives gives us the suggestion that it comes from God.

Now secondly, I'm just going to kind of lay out these things and then examine them with you later. Secondly, we read about the character of the Bible. The character of the Bible. This argument goes like this, it's kind of somewhat of a theological argument. It says the Bible presents a high view of God and exposes the sin of man. Along with that, the Bible has a remarkable unity even though it was written by some 40 different men over a period of 1,600 years. Now it's very true. All of these arguments are objectively correct and so don't think that I'm suggesting that the argument in and of themselves is wrong or mistaken. You must understand the greater picture that is about to come later on. So the character of the Bible says a high view of God, sinfulness of man, remarkable unity over such an amazing chronology. It has one doctrinal system, one plan of salvation. The Bible deals frankly with the sins of its characters. You can read, you know, I just spoke about David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, and yet David was a man greatly flawed in his sin with Bathsheba, his murder of her husband, and so the Bible deals frankly with this and that this is different from human writings which often cover up the defects of the people that they love. And the character of the Bible causes one writer to say this, "We must conclude that the Bible embodies divine revelation since mere men could not have originated such a world and life view." Man wouldn't have come up with this idea of God. Man wouldn't come up with a system that condemns man as sinful and so therefore the character of the Bible shows that it's probably from God.

Now, thirdly we can read this, you read about the influence of the Bible. The influence of the Bible, and the idea here is that the Bible has had such a remarkable positive impact on all walks of life and as a result of that, the effect of the Bible, the effect of its teaching, gives us an indication that it is from God. The idea is that it has led to achievements in art and architecture. Think about the great cathedrals in Europe. Literature. Music. It's

influenced the laws of nation and produced social reform and changed thousands of lives. Surely that impact of the Bible, its influence shows that it's from God.

And so we've seen the indestructibility of the Bible, the character of the Bible, the influence of the Bible, and it all starts to sound pretty impressive, doesn't it? These are things that are, you know, we agree with that. We agree that the Bible is indestructible. We agree that it's got a wonderful character of unity about it. We agree about the historical nature of its influence. How could we even be possibly suggesting that there's something wrong with this argument, you might well ask? "Preacher, I don't see where you're going to have any criticisms of this." There's a fourth argument in this evidential approach. It deals with fulfilled prophecy. The idea is that because God is omniscient, only God can reveal the future. God's the only one who knows the end from the beginning. And so one theologian writes, "Many prophecies about the course of human nations have been fulfilled proving that the Old Testament expresses divine revelation so that fulfilled prophecy shows that the writers possessed the divine mind." That same writer goes on to say this, "If we weigh separately," now this is where the pivot comes, this is where you need to listen really, really carefully to see what this evidential argument is saying and what it is not saying. This writer says, "If we weigh separately the arguments presented here," the indestructibility, the character of the Bible, the influence of the Bible, fulfilled prophecy, "we may not find any one 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 a divine revelation." Another writer says this and this is where you need – oh, listen here and you'll understand why this is of such great concern – another writer who believes that evidence demands a verdict says this about this cumulative, all of these things that have been said, "This does not prove the Bible is the word of God but it shows the Bible is unique."

Now stop there for a moment, step back and remember the different Scriptures that we looked at. Over and over and over again, Old and New Testament where the Bible asserts itself to be the word of God, "His word is on my tongue. Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. All Scripture is breathed out by God. You receive from us not the word of men but for what it really is, the word of God." Now, beloved, as you see those things side by side and you see a conclusion of the evidential argument that says this does not prove the Bible is the word of God, it should trouble you to say how can a Christian book take what God says is the word of God and reduce it to something less and say that we haven't proven that the Bible is the word of God? It's as though this evidential argument leaves you with the question in the garden of Eden, "Has God really said this," because it leaves open the door, even if it's only a little crack, it leaves open the possibility that maybe there's another way to view this evidence. Ultimately what the evidential argument is doing is it's making a probability case. In any other situation, you could say it's a good probability case. Look at all of these factors, consider the cumulative weight of the argument and be impressed and you – here's the key – you come to the conclusion that this is the word of God, so that the evidence is given to you, you are the one who stands in judgment of the evidence and you render the verdict, "Is the Bible the word of God or not? I've considered the evidence and now I will pronounce judgment. I will render the verdict on it."

Beloved, that ought to make you very uncomfortable, say something's amiss here. If what these arguments do lead us to the point where we say something like this, "In my judgment, yes, this is the word of God based on all of these arguments," we have strayed at the most fundamental point if that is the basis, if that is the foundation of our argument. Because here's my question, here's my question to somebody who would say that, "I've considered the evidence. In my judgment, yes, the Bible is the word of God." Here's my question, "Well, what was the argument before you were born? What will the argument be after you are gone? Your judgment doesn't matter here. You're just a passing wisp in the wind. How are we to know these things in a way that transcends human judgment? Are we just left with a probability argument? And I think that's a pretty good case, yeah. I'll take it as the word of God based on what I think." Are you kidding me? That's what we proclaim, we proclaim the opinions of men? I do not teach the word of God based on the judgment of my own that this is where God has spoken. That is not the basis upon which I preach at all. I believe it's the word of God but that's not the basis of authority from which I speak at all.

Now let me tell you something. Sitting out in my car, I didn't bring it in with me because I didn't want to confuse things by showing it to anyone who might ask, I want to share something factual with you that should frighten you if you have been raised on these evidential arguments and thought that this was the best case that could be made for. This should frighten you. Beloved, the evidential approach ultimately backfires on us because Muslim apologists make the same kind of arguments for the authority of the Koran. They make the exact same kind of arguments about the impact of the Koran on culture and what it has done for architecture and all that. They're making the exact same argument for a completely different satanic book. Now, if we're making the same argument something's wrong. Something's not right with that. Somehow these arguments are subject to a satanic counterfeit that leaves us vulnerable and what you need to see is that in both cases, the Christian evidentialist and the Muslim apologist is doing the exact same thing. They're saying, "You look at all of this evidence, you make a decision on your own about what is true." And if you're left with competing claims for the Bible and the Koran, then how are you to know? How are you to find out? On what basis are you able to sort through all of that?

Beloved, these arguments, the information upon which these arguments are based for Scripture, it's not bad information and for the believing Christian it's, you know, it's helpful, it's encouraging to see something like that, but here's where it falls down, here's where it fails: it bypasses divine authority. It bypasses what God says. It bypasses the very authority of the one whose opinion alone is the opinion that matters. And I ask the question this way. I ask the question this way and let me just remind you of what one of the advocates of the evidential approach says, "This does not prove that the Bible is the word of God." We're left with a probability argument. Are we really, beloved, are we really going to stake what is true, are we really going to stake our eternal destiny on a probability argument that this is most likely the word of God? Is that the best we can do as Christians? And just, you know, just kind of cross our fingers for the gap between

what's probable and what's certain? Out on the suggestion. By no means under any circumstances.

What is the biblical approach? What is the better approach for considering the authority of Scripture? Well, let me give you two words. You only need to remember two words out of today's message to point yourself in the right direction. You don't have to remember all kinds of ancient history. You don't have to remember all kinds of matters of filled prophecy and the history that corroborates it. You don't have to know the world history and the unfolding of civilizations that did or did not have the word of God and all of those things that are beyond many of our minds and reading. Two simple words settle the matter: Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. That is the biblical approach. That's the start of the biblical approach and here's what we need to remember, here's what we need to remember, beloved, in one sense, I can sympathetically appreciate what the evidential argument is trying to do. You know, trying to get something that can be presented to an unbelieving man to consider and to dislodge him from his, you know, dislodge him from his presuppositions. But it's fundamentally flawed. It's all fundamentally flawed. First of all, unbelieving men, by definition, are dead in their trespasses and sins. Scripture says that the natural mind cannot receive the things of God, that the natural man is at enmity with God. He's an enemy of God. He's not going to receive these things the way that the evidentialist thinks. If it was such a conclusive argument, then it would settle it for everybody but these things are routinely rejected. Here's what you and I have to remember as Christians, beloved, our goal and our responsibility, our duty in understanding how we know that the Bible is true, our goal is not to craft an argument that will please unbelieving men. Let me say that again, our goal is not to craft an argument that will please unbelieving men.

Look over at 1 Corinthians 2:14 or verses 12 through 14. 1 Corinthians 2:12 through 14. The Apostle Paul says, "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God." 1 Corinthians 2, I still hear some pages turning. 1 Corinthians 2. Then in verse 14 he says, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." My point here is that it is a fool's errand to try to build an argument that will satisfy an unbelieving mind about the authority of God. We're not trying to impress them in what we're saying here.

Our goal and our responsibility is different, beloved, and this is such a crucial distinction I could stand on the pulpit table in order to emphasize it, if only I could. If only that were appropriate but it's not. Our goal is not to start by saying how can I make this palatable to an unbeliever, to someone who's hostile to the faith. That's not my job to start there. It's not your job to start there either, beloved. Your first responsibility, your primary essential duty from which all other duties flow is to be faithful to Christ, to be loyal to Christ, to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind. Your goal is to live out obedient loyalty to Christ, to be faithful to him. Look over at 1 Corinthians 4:2 here and you see this. 1 Corinthians 4:2, "it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." It is required of stewards that they must be found faithful.

Now beloved, let's deal with Christianity 101 here. Who is the supreme authority in the universe? It's Jesus Christ. Who is the supreme authority in your life as a Christian? It's Jesus Christ. We must start our consideration of how to know the Bible is true by remembering who the ultimate authority is, and the ultimate authority is not you, it's not your judgment on the evidence, the ultimate authority is Jesus Christ. Let me just remind you of that principle. Philippians, you don't need to turn there, Philippians 2:10 and 11, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." In Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, "All authority has been given to me." All authority given to Christ. Every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Now Jesus made point of this as he spoke to the disciples on the eve of his crucifixion. Look over at John 13, the gospel of John 13. We're making not just a case for how to know the Bible is true, we are reminding ourselves of who the authority is in our lives as Christians. In John 13:13, Jesus says this to the disciples whose feet he had just washed. He said, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am." Look at that again, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am."

Beloved, we don't look to Christ simply as, only as our Savior from sin. He is that and we thank God for that but as a Christian we don't only receive him as our Savior, we don't simply believe in him in a moment of time in order to get deliverance from eternal damnation and then go on living how we were beforehand. That's not Christianity. That's a false view that would separate the Savior-hood of Christ from the Lordship of Christ. No. No. When we believed in Christ, we received him for all that he is. His person and his offices are indivisible. They can be distinguished to help us understand but we receive Christ for who he is, the one indivisible, eternal Son of God manifested in human flesh. And that has implications. It means that Christ is our teacher. It means that Christ is not only the Savior of your soul, it means that Christ is the Lord over your mind. Christ is the Lord who tells you what is true, how you are to think, and you respond in obedient faith and say, "Lord, I take what you say as true because you are the final authority. All authority has been given to you. You are my authority. I have yielded to you as Lord therefore my primary responsibility in matters of truth is to understand what you say and then conform my mind to it and affirm what you say is that which is true." Christ is not only the lawgiver over our bodies, the authority of Christ is so much more than the human aspects of the 10 Commandments in the second table, don't commit adultery, don't lie and all of that, beloved, Christ is the Lord over your mind. He instructs us and we conform our mind to his. We see what he believes, we see what he taught, and we implicitly accept it as a matter of obedient faith to be faithful to him. He exemplifies attitudes and we adopt them as our own.

Look over at the book of Ephesians. Ephesians 1. As you turn past Corinthians and past Galatians, you'll come to Ephesians. In Ephesians 1 beginning in verse 15, the Apostle Paul is praying for the church and he says in verse 15, "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to

give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him." Notice how Paul prays and what it is that he wants us to understand and to grasp and to grow in and to expand in our hearts, "having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ," stay with me here, follow along, this is about to explode like dynamite on our minds and hearts here, "he worked in Christ when [God] raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." Paul is praying for believers to understand the absolute supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he is far above every other spiritual power, he is far above every other authority. He is the head of the church. He is Lord over all. We recognize him and give him honor for the surpassing greatness of his position in the universe as Lord over all. There's no one above him.

Now how does that apply to how we know that the Bible is true? And beloved, let's set aside the evidential arguments that we've seen and just start with a far simpler approach to life and what I am to believe. The question that we always start with is what does Christ think? What does Christ say? What he says is revealed to us in his word. This is not something that we mystically intuit and we make a subjective guess, "Well, I think Christ would say this. I think Christ would say we should accept all religions in a spirit of love and tolerance." That's not what Christ thinks. We go to his word and we see what he thinks. What does Christ think about Scripture? What does Jesus himself say about the word of God?

Well, let's start in Matthew 5. Turn back there with me. Matthew 5. In Matthew 5:17 and 18 we read this, and remember, beloved, it's so important to receive this not just as printed words on the page but to remember that the one who speaks, the one who speaks here in Matthew 5 is the one who is far above all rule and authority. The one who speaks here in Matthew 5 is the one whom every tongue will confess that he is Lord and that every knee will bow before him. The one who speaks in Matthew 5 is the one who is our teacher, our supreme teacher and Lord. We are not at liberty to disagree with him nor would we even want to. The highest position of the human mind is to be aligned with the mind of Christ. And so what did Christ say about the Scriptures as they existed at his time? He says in verse 17, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished." He says the word of God is so certain, so authoritative, that not a dot on an i or a cross of the t will fail until it's all fulfilled to perfection. Listen, this is so important. Does that sound like a probability argument to you? Is Christ speaking in probabilities when he says not a dot, not a tittle will fail? This is not a probability argument. This is absolute certainty from the Lord of the universe asserting the inviolable nature of the word of God.

Over in Matthew 24, you can turn there with me. Again, we're taking the time to turn. I could just quote them, but we're taking the time to turn so that you can see these with your own eyes, that you can, you know, make a little mark in the margin of your Bible, "Oh, this is important." Matthew 24:35. Matthew 24:35, Jesus says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." Look at it again. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." The word of God is more certain than everything that you see with your eyes. The word of God is more certain than the passing of human history. The word of God is more certain than anything else and we say that not as a dogmatic statement based on human opinion, we state that as a dogmatic statement because it's what our Lord said. His words will not pass away. It cannot be broken.

In fact, Jesus said look over before we get to, I was going to go to John, but let's go first of all to Luke 24. Luke 24. This is after the resurrection which in some ways is just an added layer of authority to what we've seen. The passages that we read in Matthew 5, Matthew 24, based on the authority of the word of Christ, that's all that we need. It's sufficient. It's certain. It's conclusive. But as we come to Luke 24, there's another layer of authority that's added to beyond even what we saw in those two passages from the book of Matthew because what we're about to read here in Luke 24 is spoken by the resurrected Christ. He's speaking after he conquered death. He rose from the grave on his own power. By the power of God he came out from under death and now is alive forevermore, having shown that he is Lord over all authorities, all spiritual beings, and he's Lord even over the realm of death itself. And what does the resurrected Christ have to say? In verse 44, Luke 24:44, he says, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." He says in verse 44, "Everything written about me must be fulfilled."

And then in John, the gospel of John 10, we read in verse 35, Jesus says, "Scripture cannot be broken." Scripture cannot be broken.

Now let me give you a preview of coming attractions here. What we are saying this morning is conclusive and settles the matter according to the highest authority in the universe. Jesus Christ affirms the authority of Scripture and says that it cannot be broken, that it must be fulfilled, that it will not pass away. That's how we know that the Bible is true. We take it on the authority of Christ himself. Not on arguments that we deem sufficient or questionable according to our own judgment. We are not at liberty to disagree with Christ. This is what he has said about the word himself. And for those of us that he has saved by grace, that the Spirit worked in our heart to convict us of sin and to lead us to faith in Christ and to trust in the blood shed in an atoning way at the cross of Calvary, that's all the authority we need. I don't need someone with a doctorate at some seminary someplace to strengthen my conviction on this. If they have something helpful,

I'll be happy to listen to it, but they're not the final authority. If they contradict this and, you know, write a book of 600 pages to contradict these things, they're wrong. It doesn't matter. If they would contradict Christ, they are wrong by definition. We receive the word of God as true based on what Christ himself has said about it. His view is supreme. Christ saw Scripture. Christ said that Scripture is eternally flawless. The known universe will literally collapse before one dot of the word of God fails. That's how authoritative and certain this all is.

And so beloved, I ask you, having seen these things side by side, is it historical evidence that certifies this to us and our judgment about that historical evidence that certifies these things to our hearts and gives us confidence that they are true? Or is it the eternal Son of God who loved us and gave himself up for us, is it he who certifies the word to us? Beloved, it is Christ. And in some ways, beloved, I'm just helping you work out the important implications of what those of you who are Christians would say you believe to be about Christ, what you believe about Christ for yourself personally. Is Christ your Lord? Is Christ your teacher? Is Christ your guide? Is Christ, in the words of Thomas in John 20, is Christ your God? Is Christ your shepherd? I know many of you are saying, you know, your heart is bursting with the desire you almost want to shout it out, "Yes! Yes! Yes! My Lord, my God, my teacher, my guide, my shepherd, my rock, my fortress, my Savior, my hope, my peace!"

Well, beloved, don't you see then that what Christ says settles the matter not in a probable way, but in a final manner of ultimate certainty that this is conclusive? Beloved, this is what it means, this is an outworking of what it means to trust him. Not simply to believe in the fact of an atoning work at the cross. Not just to believe that he died for my sins. Not just that but to say, "I know him. I know that he is God in human flesh. I know that he is my Lord, and I believe what he says and that settles it for me with certainty." Beloved, you are not meant as a Christian to be tossed about by the waves of changing doctrine and by the waves of conflicting opinions of men. That is not what Christ saved you to, and even though we turned to this passage recently, let's go back to Ephesians 4. There are things in the Christian life, there are things about Scripture where you settle the matter in your mind, you make a conclusion that says, "I will not move from this."

In Ephesians 4 and, again, I realize that I alluded to this recently. Ephesians 4:11, the risen Lord gave to his church "apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that," here's the purpose of all of that teaching instructional ministry built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets and then built upon by others whom Christ appointed following the apostolic age. The point of it is this, "so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes." Beloved, you're not meant to be tossed about on these eEssential fundamental doctrines as if they were actually open for discussion, that if what God says in his word could possibly actually not be true. You're not meant to be like that. God intends for you to have a Christian mind that is built on the right

presuppositions, that is built on the authority of Christ and that follows him in what he taught with a calmness of heart, with a satisfied mind, with a resolution of will that with Luther says, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me."

Verse 15 he says, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ," into Christ, watch this, "from whom," it's from the person of Christ that we grow in doctrine. It's from the person of Christ that we transcend human opinions, human cunning, human contradictions to the truth of God, it's through Christ that we overcome the insinuations of the devil saying the same things that he said to Eve in the garden, "Has God really said this," and insinuating doubt by the very question in your mind. It's into Christ, verse 15, "from whom the whole body," you and me, "joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." Not tossed about. Not drawing our hope from probability arguments made by human authors on historical matters that are hard to find. We go straight to Christ. We say, "Lord, what do you say about the word of God?" Christ, as it were, responds, "Scripture cannot be broken. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." And we, in grateful response, bow before him and confess him as Lord and say, "Yes, Lord, I believe. Yes, Lord, I accept what you have said. Yes, Lord what you said is the attitude that I adopt for my own. Lord, you did not speak in probabilities, you do not leave open the possibility of being wrong. You couldn't. You're God. You're true. You're the truth. And as my Lord, my God, my teacher, my guide, my shepherd, my friend, you would never steer me wrong on such a fundamental matter. So yes, Lord, I believe. Help me in those times when I'm tempted to unbelief."

Now what we're going to find over the next couple of times together is we're going to see how this works out in detail. We're going to see how Jesus affirmed so many individual things in the Old Testament to leave beyond question that he was affirming it in all of its totality. We're going to see a little further on how Jesus prepared for the writing of an authoritative New Testament. Beloved, we've only started, in other words, in seeing and embracing what Christ has said. We've just taken it in the most general way, looking at the Lordship of Christ and seeing what he said about Scripture as a whole. Now what we're going to see in times to come is how incredibly many times, item by item by item you look at the specifics and you see that they always conform to the general principle of Jesus affirming the authority of Scripture as stated in the Old Testament and in the provision that he made for the writing of the New Testament. And what we're going to find are that two words are sufficient to establish in our minds and in our hearts the authority of the word of God, and that the Bible alone, the Bible alone, the Bible alone is the word of God. Those two words: Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God. Stay with us in the days to come as we establish this most essential block in the building of a Christian mind.

Let's pray together.

Christ, we bow before your great authority. You are the one whom heaven and earth adore. The angels bow before you and wonder at the majesty of your being. O Christ, the

Father looked down on you from heaven and said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." This Holy Spirit exists, the Holy Spirit works and the essential aspect of his ministry is to glorify your name, O Christ. You are high and lifted up, exalted above the heavens, raised from the dead, at the right hand of the throne of God interceding for your saints. There is no higher authority in our lives than you, O Lord. We embrace you for all that you are, and we pray for those that are lost in sin and that are hearing these things maybe in a new way, a fresh way for the first time today. Father, we pray that your Spirit would enliven their hearts to turn to Christ and say, "Be all of that to me as I repent from my sin and receive you as the Lord over my life, not just in my life, but in my very mind and the way that I think." You're worthy of that, O Christ. You can be trusted. You are the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through you. And you have given us abundant testimony in the Scriptures about what you think about the truthfulness and the trustworthiness of the Bible. You affirmed it without qualification and therefore, Lord, following you, so do we come what may. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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