

Why Do We Believe the Bible?

By Don Green

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Truth Community Church

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

We are starting tonight a series that I'm loosely calling "Together in Truth," and it's a wonderful opportunity for us to unite around, to rally around the great truths of Scripture and the whole sweep of Christian theology from the authority of the Bible to the matters of end times, and so in the course of three weeks and 11 messages we are going to cover central matters of truth, answering ultimate questions like who is God, and what is sin, and what is salvation. And so tonight we ask the ultimate question, in one sense, if you think about it, everything about true Christian theology rests upon the teaching of the Bible and the question then, the ultimate question that needs to be asked and answered is this: why do we believe the Bible? Why do we believe the Bible? And it's important for us to realize that our answer to that question has great implications for young people as they start to move out into the world, they need to understand what it is they believe, for a new Christian, you need to understand why you believe the Bible, and for the mature saint, we need to review these things as well, these need to be fresh in our minds; we need to always have this answer on the tip of our tongues and Scripture often talks about the value of repetition and reminding ourselves of things that we've studied in the past. The Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3 said that he wanted to stir up his readers by way of reminder to strengthen them and to encourage them and to sustain them in the difficult days that lay ahead for them. So that's what we're going to do. As individual Christians, we want to know the answer to the question why do we believe the Bible? As a church, as Truth Community Church, we want to know the answer to the question why do we believe the Bible? Why do we place such an emphasis on it? Why is it that when we gather together we give 60 minutes to the teaching of Scripture and 30 minutes to everything else? Why such a disproportionate emphasis on Scripture at Truth Community Church? There are reasons for that and it's all rooted in the authority of Scripture, and so it's not overstating it to say that there is no question more fundamental to answer than why do we believe the Bible. Everything else flows from that central source, everything else is built on that foundation.

Now before we go into a two-part answer to that question, or the two-part structure of tonight's message more accurately, I want to remind you of a most fundamental truth. We need to remember who Jesus Christ is, who he actually is independent of what we believe about him, and who he is to us as believing people. We have to remember who Jesus Christ is if we're going to get the answer to Scripture answered correctly, and in John 13:13, Jesus said this, he said, "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am." Jesus is Lord in the sense that he is Master over all of the universe. It was through

Christ that God created the world and everything that is in it. He is Lord in that sense and we've talked about that a number of times. I want you to focus on in that text from John 13:13, is that Christ says that he is our Teacher, and we call him Teacher and we are right because that's what he is, that's what he claimed for himself and he is accurate in everything that he says because he is the way, the truth and the life. Jesus said, "I am your Teacher," and that means that we go to Christ to get our instruction, we go to Christ to find out the way things really are. And so when we come to the words of Christ and all of Scripture is the word of Christ, that's for another time, but as we focus specifically on the words that Christ said during his earthly ministry, you must understand and remember this, that Jesus Christ is the supreme Teacher. He is the highest authority in all of the universe, there is no one above him, and for us whom he has saved, he is our Teacher and that means that we respect what he says and we take what he says as the highest authority and everything that Christ says determines for us what the truth is. We submit our thinking, we submit our opinions, we submit our evidences all to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and whatever he says about it, settles the argument for us. When Jesus Christ speaks, the argument is over and that's the fundamental thing that we need to remember as we approach our material for tonight. Jesus Christ is our Teacher. He is the one who instructs us.

In a verse that we often quote, John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth," I am the truth, "and the life," and to say that he is the truth and to respect his word and to honor his word as the truth means that Jesus tells us the way things really are. This is the way things really are throughout all of the universe, everything that Christ speaks to, everything that is affirmed in his word is the way that things really are and that goes, my friends, that goes especially to the matter of the authority of his word. Why is the Bible authoritative, why do we believe the Bible, we must remember who our Teacher is to start at the right place. Jesus Christ is our Teacher and Lord, therefore we look to what he said, what he did, and that determines the answer for everything else on this central matter of the authority of Scripture, and why we believe the Bible. Jesus guides us into the truth.

Now just to reinforce that central point of the authority of Christ just a wee bit, but in Ephesians 1:20 and 21 it says this about Christ, it says that 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." Christ is far above all rule, far above all authority, and so when he speaks, he speaks from that position of absolute final authority. If you think about it in US Constitutional terms, the United States Supreme Court is the final authority on what the Constitutional law means in our land. There is no appeal above the Supreme Court. Well, in a far greater infinite way, in the court of the universe, Jesus Christ is the final authority on what is true, and so you have to go, the Christian position is that you have to go to Christ and to understand what he says before you can get to the right answer about anything.

And before we dive in a little further into the two-part aspect of tonight's message, I just want to say this: the purpose of tonight's message is to establish the Christian perspective on the authority of Scripture. Tonight we're not looking to answer all of the different

criticisms that might be directed at that, we're not trying to respond to competing worldviews, we want to understand our position, we need to know what it is that we believe before we deal with these other matters in other places and in other times, tonight we're simply asking what is the Christian position, what is the biblical worldview. You and I need to understand what our position is to be in a position of strength to respond to competing truth claims around us. We need to understand why we believe the Bible, and so that has consequences for the way that we frame the question, and I want to, to just tease that out just a little bit more.

The thing that you and I need to remember is this, the question is not what do I think about the Bible? That's not an important question. What you think about the Bible and what your opinion is about the Bible doesn't matter in comparison to what Christ says about it. Your opinion and mine do not matter in the end because you and I are not the final authority. We need to know what the authority of the Bible is before we were born. We need to know what the authority of the Bible is after we are gone. The question that we are answering tonight is what establishes the authority of Scripture if you and I had never existed. You see, the authority of the Bible is independent of what you think about it. Let me say that again because it is so important: the authority of Scripture is independent of any man's opinion about it. Its opinion is independent of the philosophies and the conjectures of men. That is a critical starting point for us to grasp. It's not that you and I are the authority, instead we remember who Christ is. He is the truth and he reliably and infallibly guides us into the truth of all of the matters about which he spoke. He does not err. He cannot lie. And so what Christ says is the final truth, the final authority for us,

So Jesus Christ, the authority, what he says is ultimately the only thing that matters. He's the final court of appeal, for a severe lack of a better term. So having said that by way of introduction, here's what I want you to do, I want you to hold that thought in your mind because we're going to go a different direction for a short period of time, deal with a few matters, and then come back to this matter of the authority of Christ but I wanted to start there and get that established in our minds first and then we'll circle back around to that later in the message.

Now let me just restate the question to launch us into the content and the main structure of tonight's message. Why do we believe the Bible? That's the question we're answering tonight. Now most of us are used to an approach to establishing the authority of Scripture that is known as the evidential approach, the evidential approach to establishing the authority of Scripture and that's our first section tonight in a message, the evidential approach. You may not have known to call it that specifically but we're going to start there and we're just going to look at what the evidential approach says about establishing the authority of Scripture, and for tonight's purposes we'll look at four subpoints under the evidential approach to it, and the evidential approach is represented popularly by a man named Josh McDowell who has written several books on the authority of Scripture, "Evidence that Demands a Verdict," was one of his central primary early books that laid out all kinds of helpful information, the evidential approach will say something like this, it will point to four different things among others, it'll often start with what they call or

what's known as the indestructibility of the Bible, the indestructibility of the Bible. In his book "Evidence that Demands a Verdict," Josh McDowell says this and I quote, "The Bible has withstood vicious attacks of its enemies. Many have tried to outlaw it from the days of Roman emperors to communist dominated countries. The Bible survived those attacks and that suggests that it is the word of God." What he's saying historically about that is true, there were in the early days of the Roman empire in the first three centuries, there were 10 waves of persecution, the authorities burned copies of Scripture and its remarkable, it's remarkable that it survived when the supreme power on earth was actively looking to destroy the copies of Scripture and thus squash out Christianity by taking away their sacred writings, and yet they couldn't do it. In other lands and in other times, this has happened. You know, Scripture went into a period of dark ages when the Catholic Church diminished its role and elevated the role of their rituals and their traditions and the teaching of Scripture was nearly lost during that time, and we look at these things and now we find here we are, we've got more Bible translations than ever, we have museums that preserve some of the early manuscripts of Scripture, and we see that the Scriptures have survived for thousands of years against attacks that sought to destroy it, and the evidential approach says, "See, this is an indication that the Bible is God's word. It suggests that. Its enduring nature shows that this book is from God." That's the indestructibility argument.

Now secondly, the evidential approach will speak to the character of the Bible. The character of the Bible, and they'll make this observation that there are 66 books in the Bible and they have a remarkable unity in the system of truth that they proclaim. Now sure, some people argue that there are contradictions but that's not germane to the argument as it stands here, notwithstanding the claim of contradictions by some, the Bible presents a unified system of truth and that's remarkable because you realize that the Bible was written by some 40 different human authors, male authors, over the course of some 1,500-1,600 years, it's remarkable not only that but in different cultures and in different languages even, to find that there is this consistency of the truth system that it proclaims is remarkable and suggests that the Bible is the word of God, that somebody should consider these things and deliver a verdict on it and say, "Oh, in response to that evidence, I agree that the Bible is God's word." That's how the argument goes. The character of that unity points to a divine author. Sometimes people will point out the very true point that if one man writes a book on the same subject 20 years over the course of his lifetime, there are likely to be inconsistencies within one man and one topic over the course of just 20 years. Well, you multiply that by exponentially by 40 authors and 1,500 years and three different languages, different cultures and, you know, you realize that there is something unique about Scripture there.

Thirdly, you see the indestructibility argument, the unity argument or the character of the Bible, thirdly, sometimes people will make this argument about the influence of the Bible. The influence of the Bible and they'll make the claim and we're just obviously summarizing these points very very quickly and briefly, but the Bible has been the source of social reform in nations across the course of history. It has changed individual lives and the fact that the Bible has that impact on societies and that impact on individual lives

points to the fact that surely there must be a divine author behind it because this is proof that it is God's revelation, its power to change lives indicates that it is God's word.

Now without going too deeply into that argument, I want to tell you is the case with all of these evidential arguments, it's a slippery slope and these arguments aren't as compelling or final as they might seem upon an initial friendly reading. One of the things that makes that stand out is that this influence argument about how the Bible has changed cultures and changed nations and so forth, my friend, you need to understand that that is the exact argument that Muslims use to establish the so-called divine origin of the Koran. They say, "Look at the change, look at the impact that the Koran has had on all of these countries that have embraced Islam as their religion." So that social impact argument can cut both ways and it illustrates the fact that these things are a little bit more slippery, not as compelling, not as final as they might seem to us as we're reading them on a first friendly basis.

Finally, the evidential argument will point to fulfilled prophecy. Fulfilled prophecy, and the argument goes something like this: only an omniscient God can reveal the future, the Bible contains many prophecies about Jesus Christ and the course of nations that were fulfilled after they were written, and the ideas that this proves that the Bible expresses divine revelation because fulfilled prophecy must come from a God who knew the future and therefore was able to state it in advance. And those are some of the primary arguments from the evidential position.

Now there's a very critical quotation that, a critical point that evidentialists will often make, they say this and I'm quoting from Josh McDowell on page 21 of one of the editions of his book "Evidence that Demands a Verdict," he says this, he says, "This does not prove the Bible is the word of God but it shows that the Bible is unique." Let me read that again, "This does not prove that the Bible is the word of God but it shows that the Bible is unique." The idea is that you present these different arguments, you pile up these different evidences and then you ask or you call upon the person who is hearing them for him to make his judgment on the evidence, and the final decision rests with the person who has been presented with these evidences and they have to decide for themselves whether it's true or not. You know, the freely stated point is that we're talking in terms of probabilities here, you need to consider isn't it more probable, isn't it more likely than not in light of all of these things that the Bible is the word of God? And that's kind of the approach and then they argue and reason from there.

Here is the problem with all of those things and I want to say this and I want to be mild in what I say here, I appreciate the evidential arguments for the believing heart, these are things that strengthen our confidence and give us a sense of how to view God's word in a broader context of history and other things, to go on and, you know, these are good things to know, but they don't go to the issue of final authority. I believe that they are sadly misplaced because what they are saying is that they are only establishing the probability that the Bible is God's word. It's more likely than not, it's probably God's word.

Well, my friend, that is not the Christian position at all. That is not at all what we are saying when we open God's word and the Bible says, "Thus saith the Lord." It's not in the realm of probability and conjecture, take it or leave it, you know, weigh it in the scales and which side of the scale comes down, that is not the truth claim of Christianity at all and I say that with sympathy to the brothers who have made the argument, but that is not the truth claims of Christianity at all. The truth claim of Christianity is this: the Bible is the word of God and you are called upon to believe it and to submit to what it says, and that is a far different claim than asking someone to render their verdict on different evidences about the Bible. What that does is it puts this observer in the position of being the final judge of whether Scripture is really true and whether it's really God's word or not. That is not the position of Scripture at all. That would contradict the final authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and diminish him and push him off to the periphery as a man considers evidences presented to him by other fallible men. No, no, that's not what we're saying and that's not the position of Truth Community Church and it should not be the position and the final basis of your hope about the authority of Scripture at all.

You know, I remember as a brand-new Christian, I probably hadn't been a Christian for more than a year or two, I went to a series of films by Josh McDowell at Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. I went to these series of messages, these series of films and I saw all of these things and I took extensive notes as I was watching these film things, and one of the things that occurred to me is there is no way that I can remember all of this information. I didn't know any better but it just seemed to me, "Man, this is really complicated to be able to assert the authority of Scripture. I see what's being said here and I appreciate the clarity and the conviction with which the man speaks, but all of this information. Is that really how we assert the authority of the Bible?"

And I've come to believe in the course of further study that that's not the way that it should be handled. It's my judgment that the evidential approach is flawed for at least two reasons. 1. As I've been saying all along, it lacks final authority. It appeals to men to accept the arguments based on the man's judgment of their force, and the final authority is left with the person who is considering the Bible's truth claims. It's not the Bible that's the final authority, rather the man is standing over the authority and says, "I hear your arguments and I will render my verdict on whether this is God's word or not." For anyone who reads Scripture, you have to realize that there is a severe problem with that and we'll talk about some of these things a little later in the message, but to realize this is the wrong way to go about it. It lacks final authority.

And secondly, secondly, for as sophisticated as the arguments can sometimes seem to us as we're presented with information that we didn't know before and you see the historical research that goes into it and all of that, I want to say this and I say it as humbly as I possibly can, but the truth of the matter is that these arguments are so superficial in their approach and they are misguided in what they are trying to do. It is a superficial approach because it ignores the authority of Jesus Christ predominantly, and it ignores the sinfulness of man to whom the argument is being made.

Listen to a couple of key Scriptures on this point and thinking about, we're giving you evidence and asking you to make a verdict on it. You must understand that an unbelieving man is completely incompetent to make any judgment about Scripture whatsoever. He is dead in his trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2:1, and in a couple of other scriptures here that I just want to read to you. In 1 Corinthians 2:14 it says this, it says, "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." 1 Corinthians 2:14. The natural man, that is the unsaved man, is in a condition of spiritual death. He is not able to properly evaluate spiritual things and he is certainly not in any position as a child of the devil to estimate properly the truth claims of God's word inspired by God's Holy Spirit. If he does not have the Spirit, he is going to make the wrong judgment every single time. He cannot understand them, Scripture says. There is a spiritual appraisal that must be made of the truth claims of Scripture and the unsaved man does not have that capacity to evaluate them properly. So the evidential approach is superficial because it does not take into adequate account the sinfulness of man that distorts his reasoning and makes him biased against the truth claims of Scripture.

John 3, we should turn there. This is not the second Scripture that I wanted to read but we need to make this point from John 3. Again, it's a text that I come to often but in John 3:19 it says this, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world," meaning Jesus Christ has come into the world, "and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." You see, the sinful man has a bias against the truth claim of Scripture, it has a bias against the authority of God expressed in the word of God. He's biased against it and so when you are presenting evidence to the unsaved man, you need to realize, you need to understand that it's something like this, it's like to use a legal analogy, it's like trying a case before a judge that has been bribed before the case ever started. The outcome is predetermined because something has bought the judge off so that he's not going to evaluate the evidence properly, he's simply going to come to the verdict that he's been paid beforehand to reach. I know all about that. I practiced law in Chicago, that's the way it works, but that's another point for another time also. What we need to understand is the analogy that we're making here. The unsaved man is biased against the truth. He has a pre-existing bias that determines the way that he's going to respond absent an intervention from the Holy Spirit. He's biased against the truth. He hates the light. He loves his sin. He won't receive the truth because the truth would expose his sin and he loves his sin more than he loves the truth. So you cannot present evidences and expect a man, especially when you're presenting them in a probability argument, when you're doing that, you are dooming your apologetic witness from the very start and you are missing the entire point of why we believe the Bible in the first place, what's the primary reason.

Another text that helps us see this in right perspective comes from Romans 8:7 and 8 where it says this, it says, "the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the Law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." There is hostility against God. There is a bias against God. There is an inability to subject itself to the law of God. It is not able to do so, and so how

in the world is an unsaved man going to properly weigh evidences and come to a proper conclusion about the ultimate truth claims of Christianity? This is a misguided approach and while we respect and receive as brothers those who make the argument, we believe that they are sadly mistaken on this most fundamental issue. We value in a limited sense their evidential arguments, but for you and I here tonight, for those of us that especially that are associated with Truth Community Church, you and I need to understand that that is not our truth claim. The evidential approach does not represent the truth claim that we make, it is not the truth claim that undergirds the foundation of our church, it's not what we assert to unbelievers around us. We're not primarily concerned with making those kinds of evidential arguments as the primary focus of why we believe the Bible.

Now that's a lot to take in and that's all that I want to say about the evidential arguments, remembering that this is a survey summary kind of message, a summary series that we're doing here. We realize that we can't go into great detail on any single point, as important as the point may be, but instead of the evidential approach, what I want to lay out before you is what we could call the biblical approach or even the presuppositional approach, although I'm not going to deal with that term in particular. We're wanting to keep it on an entry-level here. The biblical approach and here is the biblical approach and it is remarkable for its simplicity and its power and that's often the way that God does things in the simplicity of his power. Why do we believe the Bible? You can answer that question in two words. Why is it that you and I submit to the authority of the 66 books of Scripture? We can answer that question in just two words. You can remember these two words, you can write them down so you don't forget them if you need to, but it comes down to two basic words in the English language. Here they are: Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Those two words explain why we receive the authority of the Bible and we're going to look at this, we're going to break this down in a couple of sections that are going to be broken down even further, and let's just remember something simple and basic, very very basic about the Bible. The Bible comes to us in English in two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament, 39 books in the Old Testament, 27 books in the New Testament, and Jesus Christ had plenty to say about both. He had plenty to do with both. And remember this and remember how we started, remember how we started, Jesus Christ is our Teacher, he is our authority, he is the truth, he is far above all rule and authority, and that means that whatever Jesus says about it has to be right and there's no place else to go with it.

Well, what did Jesus say about the Old Testament and what did he say about the New Testament? Let's start with the Old Testament first. Under this biblical approach, subpoint A, Jesus affirmed the Old Testament. He affirmed the Old Testament and he affirmed it in two ways at minimum, he affirmed it in its historical record and he affirmed it in its ethical teaching. The history of the Old Testament, the ethics of the Old Testament, Jesus affirmed them both without any kind of hesitation or qualification, and let me just walk you through that very very quickly. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament, we're saying, this is the biblical approach to answering the question why do we believe the Bible.

First of all, Jesus affirmed the Old Testament starting with the historical narratives. Here we go. Jesus consistently affirmed the Old Testament narratives as historical fact, and what's particularly compelling about this argument in our skeptical age is that Jesus affirmed clearly and repeatedly those aspects of Old Testament history that are most contested and ridiculed in our age today. He consistently confirmed it and treated it as straightforward historical fact just the way that you would get the impression if you read the Old Testament for yourself unconditioned by other biases that were injected to you by liberal or unbelieving scholars.

So for example, Jesus affirmed the story of Jonah being swallowed by the great fish in Matthew 12:39 to 41. Jesus affirmed the reality of Jonah being swallowed by the great fish and, in fact, said that that was actually a sign of his coming resurrection. So critical was the reality of the historical fact of Jonah's event, Jesus affirms it and then says it was a sign of something even more important to come, "My resurrection upon which all of Christianity hinges," that's how important it was and Jesus affirmed it in Matthew 12. You can look these things up later. In Matthew 19, Jesus affirmed the account of creation found in Genesis 1 and 2. Jesus affirmed this, treated it as literal fact. Not the parables or the analogies or those kinds of things that are argued by people who want to uphold an evolutionary approach to the origins of life. No, no, no, no, Christ would have none of that. He affirmed the six day account of creation clearly in Matthew 19; even though it's contested today, Jesus affirmed it as being fact and it's an indication of the way that he approached all of the Old Testament. He affirmed it as being truth from God. Furthermore in Matthew 24:37 through 39, he affirms the account of Noah and the worldwide flood. So just on those three points, just choosing those three not quite at random but as representative of many other things that could be said, you look at Jonah, you look at Genesis, you look at Noah and you find Jesus affirming all of those matters as historical fact and – watch this – building his teaching on that historical foundation. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament. He accepted it as true.

Now time forbids me, I feel a little bit like the writer of Hebrews when he said time will fail me if I talk about these other heroes of the faith toward the end of Hebrews 11, but just to give you a sense of other things that could be said at this point, elsewhere Jesus affirmed the historicity, the historical reality, the factual, this really happened, Jesus affirmed and I'm going to go chronologically through some historical men in the pages of Scripture, Jesus affirmed the historicity of Abel, of Abraham, of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Isaac and Jacob, of the wilderness serpent, of King David, King Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, and others. All of those men Jesus pointed back to, quoted and used them as historical fact without questioning it at all. He accepted it as straightforward authoritative history. That's an indication of the mindset that he had toward the Old Testament.

Now people love to talk, liberals love to talk about the beautiful ethics of Jesus and so forth. Well, what about his ethical teaching? Well, we find that his ethical teaching came from the Old Testament as well. He said that you are to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind in Matthew 22. He said you are to love your neighbor as yourself, Matthew 22. He said to honor your father and mother, Mark 7:9 through 13. Do you realize that in all of those areas he was quoting from the Old

Testament as he made his statements? Deuteronomy 6, Leviticus 19, Exodus 20 respectively for these matters of loving God, loving your neighbor, honoring your father and mother. This is Old Testament teaching and so he affirmed its authority and it wasn't that he was simply accommodating himself to his audience because his audience believed it but Jesus knew it wasn't true. No, there's nothing about accommodation here. Jesus freely confronted people when they were misguided, he freely confronted the Pharisees who distorted the teaching of the Old Testament. He didn't accommodate anybody in what he said, as if to bring down what he knew to be true and couch falsehood in what his contemporary audience believed to be true. That wasn't Christ. He doesn't lie like that and he's not so cowardly that he feels the need to do that. No, the reason that Jesus quoted the Old Testament like he did was because he affirmed it, because he believed it, because it was true and therefore he who is the truth, who speaks the truth and cannot lie quotes freely from all of the Old Testament because he knew it to be true, he treated it to be true.

What does that mean for you and me? You have to go back, you have to go back to the original point that we started here. Jesus Christ is our Teacher and that means that we receive our instruction from him. Our responsibility as believers in Christ is to think our thoughts after what Christ thought; to think like Christ thought; to speak like he thought; to believe like he believed. If Christ believes in the authority of the Old Testament in its history, if Christ believed in the authority of the ethics of the Old Testament in his teaching, then that's what we do too. Our prior recognition of the authority of Christ settles the question. When you receive the authority of Christ and you recognize who he is, it's the first domino and you knock that and everything else falls in line. Christ is our authority. Okay, what did he say about the Old Testament? He affirmed it and he received it as truth. Well, then that's what we do as well. That is a completely different argument and far more powerful and certainly final in its authority than talking about evidences that can be taken or rejected according to whatever you weigh the probabilities out to be.

Let's take this just a bit further. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 5 as we see a summary statement from Jesus about this. This is just so utterly compelling. It's hard to understand how men that we respect in so many other areas don't make this the core of their assertion of their apologetic, but whatever, that's their problem before the Lord. Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, "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, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished." He says down to the smallest stroke of the smallest letter, the Old Testament is authoritative and everything in it will be accomplished. This is a statement of receiving the Old Testament as the authoritative word of God. Later on in Matthew 24:35, he repeated a similar thought, he said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, My words won't pass away."

Then in Luke 24:44, if you want to turn to that passage, Luke 24:44, Jesus said this in Luke 24:44, he said, "'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are 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 He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from

the dead on the third day." All things of the law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms, it all has to be fulfilled. Not the smallest letter or stroke of the law can fade away, not one of it can be set aside. Christ came to fulfill it, not to annul it.

Well, we see this comprehensive nature of the affirmation of Jesus Christ, it's as if he had the entire Old Testament in front of him and he put his hand on it and he said for all the world and his disciples to see, "I affirm it all." That's how clear and how unmistakable this is in Scripture. Jesus Christ affirmed the authority of the Old Testament. He treated it as the very word of God and that's what we do too. We treat it all as the very word of God. We receive it as utterly authoritative in all that it teaches and affirms. We do not carve out exceptions for historical matters like some want to do. You see that that's not possible because Jesus affirmed the historicity of it. We see that there is not a conflict between New Testament ethics and Old Testament ethics because Christ drew so much of his ethical teaching from the clear teaching of the Old Testament. There's just no escaping this. We recognize the supreme authority of Christ, we see how he treated the Old Testament, and we receive it and we bow in submission and we say, "Yes, Lord, I'll adopt the same attitude in English, the 39 books of the Old Testament, that You did." Jesus Christ settles the question of the authority of the Old Testament for us.

Well, what about the New Testament then? The New Testament, it's a different kind of argument. There's a different line of argument here and if you'll think with me just a moment, you'll see why that has to be the case. At the time of Christ, the Old Testament writings were in existence and he lived his life and he was living at the conclusion of the Old Testament era, and so those writings were in existence, he could look back, as it were, and affirm them. Well, think with me just for a moment. Christ himself did not write any books that are in the New Testament and the writings about him that are given in the four Gospels, the book of Acts, the letters of Paul, the general epistles and the book of Revelation, all of those came after Christ lived, died, resurrected and ascended into heaven, and so Christ wasn't here on earth at the conclusion of the New Testament to look back and affirm it all like he did the Old Testament, there is a different argument, there's a different level, there's another kind of sophistication that we need to take and understand about understanding the authority of the New Testament. And we can look at it like this, we said that Jesus affirmed the Old Testament, here on a subpoint B, we can say this, Jesus commissioned the New Testament. He commissioned the New Testament. In other words, he appointed men to write it after he was gone, you could say as a simple way of looking at it, and in so doing, Jesus pre-authenticated the New Testament during his earthly ministry. He authenticated it in advance. He provided for the writing of the New Testament while he was on earth, understanding that it would be completed after he had ascended back into heaven, but he had made provision for it while he was here on earth.

And for that, I just want to very briefly take you through three aspects of the way that Jesus commissioned the New Testament, and for that we want to turn to the Gospel of John, John 14. How did Jesus commission the New Testament? Well, first of all, he prepared for its writing. He made provision, you could say, for the writing of the New Testament in the way that we find recorded for us in the Gospel of John, John 14:26.

We're going to look at three passages from John on this point. John 14:26, Jesus speaking to his disciples said this, he said, "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's making this promise immediately to the circle of his disciples and those disciples were going to be responsible for teaching about Christ after he was gone. Much of their instruction was oral preaching done to their contemporary audience, but also included in their responsibilities was that they were going to be those who would write accounts of Jesus after he was gone, and after three years of Christ and being with Christ on a day to day basis, how were they ever going to remember the necessary things about what he said and what he did, and how would they ever remember it with accuracy by relying on their unaided human memory? Well, what Jesus is saying to them here is he is giving them a promise in advance that he was going to send the third person of the Triune Godhead, the Holy Spirit, the Father would send the Holy Spirit to them and the Helper would enable them to remember with perfect clarity and accuracy what Jesus said and what he did so that they would be able to teach it to others. You see, what Christ was doing was he was providing for the writing of the New Testament while he was here on earth.

You look at John 15:26 and 27 with this context in mind. John 15:26 and 27 Jesus said, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father," notice that in John 14 the Father would send, here it's Jesus sending, recognizing a coequal authority with the Father himself, that's a side point. "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning." The Spirit of God would be with the disciples as they were testifying to Christ.

One other passage here in John 16, just probably looking across one page in your Bible, John 16:12, Jesus said this to his disciples. He said, "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." The Spirit of God would be with the disciples as they recorded Jesus' ministry, as they explained it, and if you think about the final book of the Bible, Revelation, as they spoke about the things that would come still in the future, the Spirit of God would be guiding them in all of their teaching. Well, what God did was is that he preserved that teaching of the apostles in the 27 books of the New Testament. The Holy Spirit enabled them to write those things without error, with perfect accuracy, perfectly reflecting exactly what God wanted to say through those human personalities; for our point tonight, what we want to see is that Jesus commissioned the apostles to do that and he provided in advance for what they would need in order to accomplish that task. He commissioned the New Testament and he provided for them in advance with the promise of the Holy Spirit that would enable them to do it with perfect accuracy and with perfect authority. So Jesus commissioned the New Testament in that he prepared for its writing.

Now secondly, in addition to having prepared for its writing, Jesus commissioned the New Testament because he commissioned the apostles themselves. He commissioned the

apostles themselves. In Matthew 28, let's turn there for just a moment, Matthew 28 in the Great Commission passage of Scripture. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, "Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying," and look at this, I love how all of this fits together from God's word. Jesus makes the same point that we're making here tonight. Our point that we're making tonight is simply derivative of what Jesus first asserted about himself just before his ascension. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, he said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." There is no higher authority. Whatever Jesus says goes. That's what reality is. That's the way things really are because he is the authority. And what did he say, how did he commission the disciples? He said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Those were the 11 disciples left after Judas had betrayed Christ and gone off to his eternal destruction, but Jesus commissioned the apostles, he gave them authority and he gave them responsibility to go and teach about him. Well, for the enduring ages of the church, we don't have their oral testimony. You know, they're not here to preach to us now. We don't have audio recordings of it. Where their teaching is recorded for us is in the Scripture. This is what Jesus commissioned them to do.

There was another apostle who came later, wasn't there, the Apostle Paul, and Jesus gave the same kind of commission to Paul in Acts 26. Acts 26:14. Paul is describing his conversion when he is on trial and he said in verse 14, picking it up in the middle, he said, "when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'" Now look at verse 16, my friends, "But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you." Jesus commissioned Paul. Paul left behind 13 letters in his corpus of writings, 13 letters giving us the writings of the Apostle Paul which he wrote on commission from Christ under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Jesus planned for the New Testament. He commissioned it in that he prepared for its writing in the promise of the Holy Spirit, and he commissioned the apostles who went out and either writing them directly or by those closely associated and accountable to the apostles, we have the writings of the New Testament that Jesus prepared in advance while he was still on earth, and the outcome then of Jesus commissioning the New Testament was this, the apostles wrote God's word. The apostles wrote God's word.

So in 1 Thessalonians, if you want to turn there quickly in your Bible, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, the Apostle Paul said this, he said, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." They received it for what it really was. It was really the word of God and that is a statement of the authority of Scripture. Paul is saying that those Thessalonian believers recognized what he was saying was the word of God, now it is handed down to us in written form, and this was all flowing from the fact that Jesus

prepared for the writing of the New Testament, he commissioned the apostles, and then the apostles went out and wrote it and recorded it, and it has been preserved for us in the pages of the New Testament now.

In 1 Corinthians 14:37, Paul said, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized." What Paul wrote was the Lord's commandment. He was writing in that capacity because the Lord had commissioned him as an apostle.

One final text in 2 Peter 3. I alluded to it earlier in a different aspect of it. 2 Peter 3:1 and 2, a different apostle, Peter now says this. He says, "This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring you up by your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles." What the apostles were speaking was not merely their human words, it was commandments from the Lord himself, it was revelation from God himself, and they were doing this in accordance with the plan that the Lord announced while he was still on earth. As he commissioned the New Testament, prepared for by the promise of the Holy Spirit, commissioned the apostles, the men, the apostles, and then the apostles in furtherance of that commission and in obedience to what the Lord commanded in Matthew 28, wrote the New Testament that we have today.

So let's step back, take a deep breath, and summarize what we have seen so far before we go into our conclusion here. Why do we believe the Bible? We just remember Jesus Christ. He is the highest authority and he treated the Old Testament as the word of God, without error, that which would be fulfilled down to the smallest letter and stroke of it all. He affirmed it as the word of God. Jesus Christ, therefore, settles for us the issue of the full authority of the Old Testament, that it is the word of God and we believe it accordingly. In a different way but with the same effect, Jesus commissioned the New Testament through the promise of the Holy Spirit, the commissioning of the apostles, and then being with the apostles as they recorded his word as the Spirit worked through them.

So now what we have 2,000 years later, I trust that you get a sense of the magnitude of what we're about to do here, what I'm doing right now, as we pick up a Bible, the 66 books of the Bible, we realize that we're holding something of infinite eternal worth in our hands. We have something that is given to us and affirmed to us directly by Jesus Christ himself, of such great consequential import, certified to us by Christ himself, certified to us by his authority, not the lesser arguments of men and evidences that kind of come and go, but Christ himself comes to us in this word and has delivered it to us and calls upon us to believe it and to submit to it, to affirm it and to defend it with all of our thoughts, with all of our heart, with our blood if necessary. This is the authoritative word of God. That's why we believe it, it's because we see what Jesus Christ has said and done in connection with it. So these are the physical pages but the physical pages represent that which is of eternal worth and bears the imprimatur of Jesus Christ himself, the eternal Son of God, the revealed word of God who has always existed before time began and will

always exist after time ended, and the one to whom we will give an account one day. Wow. That's precious, isn't it, and we receive it on the authority of Jesus Christ himself.

Now let's wrap up with some concluding thoughts here. Why do we believe the Bible? Jesus Christ, by which we mean that Jesus Christ validated the authority of the Bible during his earthly ministry. So it comes down to this, my friend, all of you who are watching now or are getting this later on subsequent media, here's the ultimate question: why do we believe the Bible at Truth Community Church? We believe it because of Jesus Christ and all the reasons that I've said here. That's our corporate testimony, that we accept the Bible and as long as our current elder board is in place, this will always be the testimony of Truth Community Church. We will not waver on that at all. That will not change. That is not subject to negotiation or anything that men might throw at us. That will not change. That's what this church stands for is the authority of the Bible based on the authority of Jesus Christ. But I can't answer that question for you. I can answer it for myself, I can declare it corporately for the church but I can't answer it for you. The question is: do you believe the Bible and why do you believe the Bible? You need to understand, if you're a new Christian, new to our church, you need to be able to think through these things and articulate it for yourself and say, "Yes, I embrace that also." For those of you that are not believers, to just recognize that Christ himself comes to you and he's not asking or begging you to believe in the Bible, he's telling you what is true and commanding you to believe it and the question is whether you will repent of your sin, receive Christ and receive the capacity from the Holy Spirit to believe this most sacred word that's been given to us.

R. B. Kuiper, that's R. B. Kuiper, k-u-i-p-e-r, said this about these matters. Before I quote him, let me just set the stage for it this way. The question is do you believe Jesus Christ? If so, then you must believe the Bible. You cannot separate the two. The authority of Christ and the authority of the Bible stand together and R. B. Kuiper said this and I quote, he said this, "Nothing could be clearer than that the infallibility of the Bible and the infallibility of Christ stand or fall together." The Bible testifies to Christ, Christ testifies to the Bible. They are mutually interdependent that way. You cannot have one without the other. You can't believe the authority of the Bible without believing the authority of Christ. You can't claim Christ as Lord and diminish any part of the holy writ. It doesn't work that way. Why do we believe the Bible? Because Jesus Christ affirmed it and commissioned it and that settles the matter for us and we've seen that from the pages of Scripture.

Now just briefly here. When this position is presented as we've done it here this evening, the objection will be made, "But that's a circular argument. You're saying that you're right because you're right." Well, that's not quite what we're saying, that's not what we're saying at all. "But you're saying that the authority of the Bible establishes the authority of Christ, and the authority of Christ establishes the authority of the Bible. That's a circular argument, therefore it's invalid." No, that's not true. That's a false, bad way to think and the theologian Bruce Milne has a good answer to that in what I'm about to quote. He says this, 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." In other words, I'm not quoting him now, but in other words, if we appeal to something other than Jesus Christ to establish the final authority of the Bible, that other authority would become the final authority over Scripture, but that can't be correct, beloved, because we have seen that Christ himself is the final authority. When we quote Christ, we are appealing to the final ultimate authority that there is. There's no one above him. And so we are going to the final ultimate source of truth when we quote Christ, and what Christ says about Scripture settles the matter for us going forward.

Milne goes on to say and I quote, this is a very powerful quote. Listen carefully and we need to take time to think through these things. These are not matters that are lightly absorbed, I understand that. He says and I quote, "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." That is exactly right.

My friend, God is an infinite eternal being. How could any man who is finite, sinful and temporary, how could any man possibly give a greater testimony to the authority of God's word than what God himself has given, and we realize then that we are in a dependent position. We are dependent upon God to make truth known to us. We are dependent on Christ to know the truth of the matter. There is no one that we appeal to beyond him. Christ is the final authority. We accept that, we submit to it, and what he says determines for us our attitude toward Scripture. That's what we mean when we answer the question why do we believe the Bible, by the words "Jesus Christ." Those two words stand for everything that we've presented here this evening.

So, beloved, Jesus has spoken about the truthfulness of God's word. He said in John 10:35, the Scriptures cannot be broken. He said in John 17:17, praying to his Father, "Your word is truth." And so the question becomes whether you believe Christ or not. That settles the matter of the authority of Scripture. So why do we believe the Bible? At Truth Community Church we stake everything on Scripture. We stake everything on this book. And why do we stake everything on this book? It's because we stake everything on Jesus Christ. And do you know what? That trust in him will be vindicated in the end and I pray and trust that that will be your personal trust as well as we've expressed it here tonight.

O Father, we pray that You would be gracious to us and seal these great truths to our heart. Send Your Holy Spirit upon the unbelieving under the sound of my voice so that they could understand and receive these things. Grant them repentance and new life in Jesus Christ that they might be saved and receive this great exalted book for all that it is, the very word of God. Thank You for this time of study tonight. Bless what has been said to the heart of everyone who hears. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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