

Why We Believe the Bible - Lesson 2

by John Piper

John Piper emphasizes the importance of believing the Bible through personal testimony, historical evidence, and the transformative power of scripture.

Duration: 1:12:18

Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Divine Inspiration"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor John Piper discusses the importance of believing in the Bible and pursuing truth. He shares his personal experience of walking to church and being inspired by the bridge he crosses. He also talks about the process of preparing a sermon and how God can provide insights and thoughts in a matter of seconds that would take hours of hard thinking for humans. Pastor Piper emphasizes the need for hard work and dedication in certain areas, like writing advent poems, but also acknowledges that God can intervene and make the seemingly impossible tasks doable.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.DesiringGod.org. Welcome back this morning to why we believe the Bible, the pursuit of truth. This seminar is in partial fulfillment of the practical theology course of Bethlehem Institute.

My walk from my house to this church takes about eight minutes at a leisurely pace. Six if I'm huffing it. I probably walked it 5,000 times.

And crosses the bridge out there on 94. And it is an incredibly fruitful walk. If I could record, I should write a book someday, bridge meditations or something.

What lands on me in those six minutes, year after year, is just amazing. Let me just testify of the goodness of God in my life. Because one of the reasons we believe what we believe, whether it's a book or a person or a God, is much more personal than intellectual for most of us.

That is, we credit somebody as trustworthy. By and large, not because we have amassed a long list of intellectual qualifications that they have or something like that, but because you've watched them and you've been around them. And they just bear the marks of integrity and authenticity.

And that's the way it's going to be ultimately with Jesus or not. And with God. And my walk with Jesus between the house and here is a sweet walk.

Sometimes people stop and give me a ride. I say, well, sometimes I take a ride and sometimes I don't. Because I'm right in the middle of something.

In fact, this morning I had to reach in my pocket and stop at the newspaper selling place over there and write down a couple of things. I said, oh, I'm going to forget this if I don't write this down. Like Jonathan Edwards, he used to ride on horseback and keep his pen and take notes and pen him.

Actually, he didn't take notes. He just pinned a piece of paper to himself. And then in his brain, he fixed the insight with the location of the paper on his coat.

And he got home and he said, OK, the piece of paper here is about the deity of Jesus. And he'd write that insight down. And he'd pull this one off and write that insight down.

Well, I have pens and I don't need to do that. But here's one thought that I was just going along thinking about the events and why the Lord postpones the second coming 2,000 years. Could have done it in 500.

Could have done it in 1,000. Could have done it in 1,500. Could have done it yesterday.

Why? One reason is to teach us, not just in our heads, but by historical experience, that nations of all kinds rise and fall and only Christ will be supreme in the end. In other words, he seems to want to give us a taste of things that seem so indestructible disappearing. Because I said last night, you know, if America disappeared and it became the United Arab States or something like that, that wouldn't shake my faith.

It would shake me. I'd cry. I'd probably be killed in the process.

But it wouldn't shake my faith because my faith is simply not America. There's really no connection. And then I just stepped back from that and I thought, you know, it is a very young country.

And nations have risen and fallen for thousands of years. And we read our history books and say, well, there's the Roman Empire for a few centuries and there's Greek in a few centuries. There's the Ottoman Empire and there are these empires and they're gone.

They're just gone. Why should we think that this is permanent? And I just think that's one of the reasons God has drawn out history so that there'll be this massive lesson book to say the best that humans could do with government, technology and whatever is fragile. And surely we should learn that lesson in these days.

And then just personally with regard to my own life and a lot of young people here and the older of you know this by experience more than they, but they're learning it. God will walk you through these weeks, these eras in your life now. And you will come up against stresses like some of our missionaries are right now.

I've got these emails that I'm going to quote tomorrow morning. Wow, they're so massively encouraging to me. I mean, they're writing to thank me and I'm just soaring with their ministry to me.

But what they find is that they are pushed to the absolute limit of multiple stresses, just to the limit of the breaking power, where I feel like President Bush surely must be walking often in these days. And in my

life, I come to those times where I say, oh, my, I got to teach five hours on the weekend. I got to write this.

I got to go over to DGM, give this. I've got to have a sermon ready for tomorrow morning. And I have to sleep because three services back to back are more challenging than two.

And I'm not sure where all that's going to fit. You say, well, it's going to take three, four or five hours to put this thing on paper on Saturday afternoon. And then you kneel down like I knelt down this morning just to read my Bible, just to read Isaiah 27 and 28.

No connection with anything except my soul and God. And there fell into my mind about eight thoughts about tomorrow morning. Just handed to me, just like that, just handed to me.

Thoughts that I didn't have before that now I have that I think will make the sermon probably doable this afternoon so that I can go to bed by nine o'clock tonight and be ready. Just give, just like that. That happens to me over and over again.

In other words, God can do in five seconds, maybe 15 seconds, what might have taken you eight, nine, ten hours to slog through by earnest, hard thinking. And I'll just say sometimes, I mean, often God lets you do it by slogging through. He never gives me an Advent poem in five seconds.

I know how long an Advent poem takes. They take 18 hours to write, period. That's what they take.

They've never shortened. They've never lengthened. It's incredible.

God has simply said to me, you will sweat if you want to do this. But with sermons and other things where it looks like this is just undoable. This is not doable.

He says, well, yeah, with you it's not doable. But with me, all things are doable. And so relax, relax.

So that's just a personal testimony that I hope you will experience yourself that confirms the Bible, confirms the reality of Jesus, confirms the promises of God, confirms his wonderful faithfulness and truthfulness. The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of bone and marrow, soul and spirit, and able to judge the secrets of the heart. That's Hebrews 4.12, and it's one of the reasons we believe the Bible.

It has this power to do what no other written word can do. It lives, it penetrates, it exposes, it clarifies, it illumines, it enlightens, it explains, it gives coherence, it does things. It does things.

It's living and active. And even when you can't articulate the reasons for your pagan or skeptical or agnostic friend over here, why this is compelling you to embrace this book and stand on this book, they're there. It's living and it's active.

So, Father, we are so eager now to try to put more foundation under our feet this morning with regard to your precious, living, active, sharp, revealing, exposing, transforming, converting, sanctifying, worldview-giving, reality-explaining word. So, I pray you'd help me and us now to be strong for these three hours we have together this morning and that you would help me not to spend too long on something less important and to major on what is most important. And you do the illumining work here, Holy Spirit, I pray, to testify in your unique way to your word.

And I pray that stability and strength would come under our lives so that whatever kind of week we're walking through, whether they're personal stresses or national or international stresses or cataclysmic, apocalyptic, end-time stresses, we will not waver but be strong that we might stand before the Son of Man when he comes, unashamed, without condemnation. In his name we pray. Amen.

We are at step three in the outline on the back of the syllabus. And I'll tell you already that we will not get to step six. I just have in my mind that that will have to stay for another day and another time.

I have a whole batch of overheads on it, but I've taught this three times now and I know I've never gotten to it. And I will do my best to try to get all these overheads into a little booklet of some kind and soon or later make it available for you because I know it is a bit frustrating to have all this dumped on the overhead and not be able to have it accumulated. But if you jot down the text, I think you could make your own overheads.

So we're at step three. Do we have the very words written by the biblical authors? So after all these years of transmission of the text, can we count on what we are looking at as what was originally written if we were to believe it was inspired and true, which I hope we do. We do not have the actual piece of paper or papyrus or parchment that a biblical writer actually wrote on.

There are no extant original manuscripts, nor are they of any other document, by the way, in the first centuries. How are the manuscripts of the New Testament then preserved? If we don't have the one that Paul wrote on, what do we have? The first printed Greek Testament, for example, was published in 1516 by Erasmus. Before that, all copying was by hand.

We owe our Bible to the meticulous love and care given by countless monks and scholars of the first 1500 years of the Christian era. So how many then, what's the lay of the land with regard to manuscripts, these written out documents? How many manuscripts of the New Testament writings do we possess today? Well, over 5,000 as of 1967. The statistics, and they haven't changed much, the statistics were 266 unsealed texts, that's written with all capital letters in the Greek, 2,754 minuscule manuscript texts written with small letters, 2,135 lectionary portions, that is, worship sections taken from books that were used in worship during the early centuries and middle ages, which quoted scriptures, and then 81 papyri, 5,236 fragments of manuscripts.

How does this amount of evidence compare with other ancient writings of the same era? We have no original manuscripts of any other writers from this period. Moreover, the textual evidence of other writings cannot compare with the wealth of New Testament manuscripts. Does this smaller number of manuscripts cause secular scholars to despair that we can know what these writers wrote? If, as Bruce says, no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt, because the earliest manuscripts of their works, which are of any use to us, are over 1,300 years later than the originals.

That's all they've got to work with, nothing before 1,300 years, whereas the New Testament texts go back much, much, much earlier than that. So are you saying that the New Testament is unique in having so many manuscripts? Yes, no other ancient book comes close to this kind of wealth of diverse preservation. For example, some of the oldest manuscripts.

The oldest is a papyrus and comes from about AD 130. It contains John 18, 31 to 33, and 37. Two of the only full early manuscripts of the New Testament come from AD 350, called Codex Sinaiticus, because it

was discovered in a monastery on Mount Sinai.

Are manuscripts the only source of our knowledge of the original wording of the New Testament? I'm going to skip this. The answer is no, but the evidence outside where secular writers refer to the New Testament are small and only corroborative, and I don't think all that significant for our purposes here. Do all these manuscripts create problems or solutions for getting back to the original writings? The answer is both.

The huge number of manuscripts of the New Testament results in two things. One, there are many variations in wording among these manuscripts because they were all copied by hand and subject to human error. There are so many manuscripts that, this is the second thing, these errors tend to be self-correcting by the many manuscript witnesses we have to compare.

So F.F. Bruce, who died a few years ago, well back in the early 80s, fortunately, if the great number of manuscripts increases the number of scribal errors, it increases proportionally the means of correcting such errors, so that the margin of doubt left in the process of recovering the exact original wording is not so large as might be feared. It is, in truth, remarkably small. Is there a branch of biblical studies that focuses on this problem of getting back to the wording of the original writings? Yes, the branch of biblical studies that works with all these sources to determine the best manuscripts is called textual criticism.

I was going to give some illustrations of the kinds of things that textual critics do, but I think that gets way too technical with the Greek and so on. I think better just to stay at the larger general level. Does the doctrine of inerrancy in the original manuscripts matter? Does it matter? See, our affirmation of faith says that the documents are inspired and without error in the original manuscripts.

There's a lot of evangelicals and others who almost scoff at that wording, because they say, since we don't have any of them, why even make any statements about them? What's the point? What's the use of making any statement about the authority or inerrancy of a piece of paper we don't have? I've thought a lot about whether that kind of scoffing is warranted, and I've asked myself this question. Does the doctrine of the inerrancy of the original manuscripts matter? My answer is yes, it matters, because it affirms the reality of objective historical inspiration. There is an objective, meaning, measuring rod for us to return to, to move back toward.

To the degree that we come close to the wording of the original, we come close to the very words of God. We are there for all practical purposes. In other words, when you take what textual critics have done in the Bible Society's Greek New Testament, or the Nestle Island Greek New Testament, that's where we are virtually.

There's almost no serious discrepancies after you get your work done on textual criticism. Let me read a few conclusions here from F.J. Hort and F.F. Bruce. The proportion of words virtually accepted on all hands as raised above doubt is great, not less on a rough computation than seven-eighths of the whole.

The remaining one-eighth, formed in great part by changes of order and other comparative trivialities, constitutes the whole area of textual criticism. The words in our opinion still subject to doubt only make up one-sixtieth of the whole New Testament. Substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation and can hardly form more than one-thousandth part of the entire text.

And F.F. Bruce says, the variant readings about which any doubt remains among textual critics of the New Testament affects no material question of historic fact or of Christian faith and practice. So, of the small fraction of disputed wordings, none of those affects any significant historical event or any significant doctrinal conviction. One of the interesting testimonies to this success of the science of textual criticism is that up until, I think, maybe it was the late seventies or early eighties, I'm not sure just when this first happened, there were two major projects.

One, the Bible Society's Greek New Testament. One, the Nestle-Allen Greek New Testament. These were the two major contemporary textual critical efforts and groups to produce an authoritative Greek Testament from which we could all work towards translation and preaching.

And somewhere along the way, those two groups found themselves in such significant agreement that they're not published separately anymore. The same Greek text is used for both the Nestle-Allen and the Bible Society's Greek Testament. So that today, if you want to read and study Greek, there's only one Greek contemporary text that's used because of the amazing extent of the agreement.

And what makes that doubly remarkable is that the people working on this are not evangelicals by and large. There are very significant evangelicals involved. But you don't have to think, well, yeah, of course, these prejudiced evangelicals have to have an authoritative text because they say they believe the Bible.

They're going to do it one way or the other. They can make it happen. You've got German scholars who, you know, they live and die for some particular fact, even if it crossed Jesus in half and others all over the world who are coming together and they are producing this text.

So this is a little personal story for me. When I went to Germany to study for my doctorate in 1971, and I was there until 74, I finally, after about eight months, hit upon, with the help of my doctor father, Leonard Goepelt, a topic for a dissertation, and the topic was Love Your Enemies, Jesus' command of enemy love in the early Christian Pyrrhonesis, in the teachings of Jesus in the early Christian Pyrrhonesis, something like that. And so I said, OK, now I know what I've got to focus on.

The very first thing I did, so every month, the doctoral candidates, about six of us with Dr. Goepelt, got together at his house out in Tusing, just outside München, and I'd get on the train, I'd go out there and I'd sit, and they'd all be in German, and I was trying to learn German and learn how to do scholarship so the Germans would smile upon it. And every doctoral candidate read a paper every month. So my turn was coming down the line.

And he was going to let me do it in English, fine, no problem. Then all the discussion would be in German, but I could read in English. So I thought, what do I do first? What do I present? I said, well, my text is clear, it's Matthew 5, 43 to 48, about, you've heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you.

So I'm going to establish the text, that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to do text criticism. So my entire paper, I read 60 minutes on saying why every word in this text is what it is.

And when I was done, Professor Goepelt, he was sitting there kind of going like this the whole time, his eyes were closed, that's the way he usually sat, listening intently. And when I was done, he said, Herr Pieper, what does he call me, Herr Pieper, that was good, but you didn't need to do that. That work is done.

We don't worry with text criticism anymore. This is a front line, major publishing, high echelon German scholar who says, Kurtz has done that for us. Kurtz Allant and Bruce Metzger, they've done that work.

We take what's right there in the Allant Greek and Testament, and that's where we'll start. But I think he was happy that I looked like a scholar anyway. But he said, don't do that on all the text.

You've got a lot of text to deal with. You don't need to spend your time reestablishing the text. You've got to do the text critical work over again.

So that's generally the issue today. And I just want to move this aside now. The issue today is not, do we have the words that Paul and Matthew and Mark and Luke and James and Peter wrote.

Nobody does any serious rejection of Christianity because we don't. Except Muslims who think that immediately the real records were stolen. False records were created within the first century.

That's what's behind all these manuscripts. And it's just a myth created. There's no historical evidence for it.

I used to live next door to a Muslim when I was over in Tom's house, and we would talk about this week in, week out. I learned more about Islam talking to this guy. And he didn't think Jesus died.

And he thinks the Bible is in a mosque. The true Bible is in the basement of a mosque in Jerusalem. And it's not at all like yours.

And we know this. I said, can you just give me any shred of historical evidence for that? Because all the evidence that everybody, all religions in the world work with when they're doing historical Christian scholarship is that all the manuscripts lead to one source, namely the one we've got right here. And he said, well, that's just the great hoax that has been pulled over your eyes.

And I don't know how to respond to something like that. But you just need to know that for many, at least that's one way that Islam has for nullifying the record of Jesus' death and resurrection. That whole hoax began soon after he slipped away and didn't get killed.

And now your New Testament is all distorted. Any question you want to raise about getting back to the original words of Jesus and the apostles? Yeah. I could have done the same kind of thing here with text criticism, I think, with the Old Testament that I did with the New.

And I didn't, number one, because I don't know it as well. And number two, because of time. But I think what you would find is the same kind of and probably even more care and rigor that was taken in the preservation of the Masoretic text of Hebrew than of these Greek texts.

Because you have the rabbinic model. Number one, they believe the canon is closed, like I argued last night. And number two, as they copied this and passed it down, both from memory and copying, there was an amazing sense of responsibility.

The Jewish people, the reason when they speak Hebrew today, I don't know if you've ever been to a synagogue and listened. The reason they will use the word in speaking, Adonai, Elohim Adonai, in referring to the Hebrew tetragrammaton, which we translate Jehovah or Lord, all caps, or Yahweh, they won't take that name upon their lips because for fear of taking it in vain. And so they have an incredibly, at least they have in the first centuries, incredibly high regard for the actual meticulous wording of the

Hebrew Old Testament.

So I think the same thing would hold sway there. There are textual critical problems in both Old and New Testament, but I think the proportion that's spoken of here in terms of an eighth and then a sixtieth and then a thousandth of any seriousness would also hold true there. How do I answer the King James only folks who claim that the contemporary text is corrupt? Well, the King James in 1611 was translated from a text that had available to it at the time, probably six Greek manuscripts.

And those six were not the earliest and not the best. And now we have 5,269 plus with centuries of Christians having analyzed them and compared them and used criteria to discern what is early and what is best and have improved upon the Greek text from which translation should come. And I've analyzed numerous ones, instances where the King James goes way far afield.

First John 5, 7, massive. Acts 9, 6, entire verse exists in the King James. It doesn't exist in any Greek manuscript.

It was brought in by Erasmus, translated from the Vulgate, the Latin. And then there are other examples where the King James is based on inferior manuscripts. And so I think it's a theological construct that says God cannot have allowed his holy inspired book for 350 plus years to have been the main translation and not be perfectly flawless in rendering the original.

Well, I just don't buy it. It's not true. You can't create theological constructs that fly in the face of such plain and obvious observations.

So that's my response. I've just never seen the sense of it. And I don't think it's worth fighting over either.

I just never entered into that battle. I don't read the books. My poor dad who is caught in the middle of it because he has a ministry and a few of the people on his board he found out later were King James only people and they've given a really hard time to him because some of these folks are so separatistic that if anybody even alludes to another version, they are written off as bad people.

And so when I came to speak at my dad's 80th birthday celebration when he retired from being the president of this ministry, these guys didn't like it because I quoted from the NASB, not even the NIV. So I know it's a problem, but I frankly find it so marginal, just so marginal in its significance that I'm not going to spend a lot of time fighting that battle. The differences between the King James and the NASB and the RSV and the NIV, nobody's going to hell because they use a particular version of the Bible.

I guarantee you. Nobody is going to have a wrong theology because of their Bible version. That just doesn't happen.

People have wrong theologies because they're bad readers. You can get right theology from King James, right theology from NIV, right theology from NASB. You can defend true theology successfully from every version of the English Bible.

It's not a big issue for me. What's a big issue for me is what I preach from, and I can decide that. And so as long as the church doesn't insist that I preach from the NIV, I'm okay.

You can all hold that in your lap if you want to, but it's too much of a paraphrase. There's another hand up here, Joe. How do I deal with the issue of why God would, in his providence over centuries, allow so many

divergent readings to happen? I don't deal with it.

I just say God is God, and that's the way it happened. And so I can then start to reconstruct some ideas. One would be God has an amazing way of the limits he puts upon his precise control of what is written and what is not.

In other words, I think he saw to it in his providence that his book was preserved as reliable. There was always a reliable testimony to himself and his son. That he was willing to subject the copying to the exigencies of historical life and human frailty, I don't know.

I don't know why. But I won't erect, without biblical warrant, which I don't see, a theological construct that says God couldn't and wouldn't do that. So there had to be one text that was preserved flawless throughout all the centuries.

Well, there isn't one. We don't have it. Let's go on.

Because in the end, where we're going to wind up this morning is that for all the historical questions that remain in your minds, your confidence in God and his word and his son and your salvation is going to boil down to some pretty basic simple things. Which is what we'll get to. All this historical stuff that I spent years and years laboring over in seminary and afterwards, and to reconstruct this course, to reread so much of this material that I once read, had a wonderful, I think, apologetic significance in helping me relax around critical scholars in Germany, knowing they didn't have the last word and things like that.

But I'll tell you, when I come to die, I won't be able to remember what I've just put on these overheads. I know I won't. My brain will not be able to call to mind 5,000 manuscripts, F. Hickory said this, and F. J. Hort said this, and blah, blah, blah.

That's not going to work. And I was thinking this morning, I may say this tomorrow, I will say it probably next Wednesday, when it comes to eschatology, you say, oh, I wonder if Bin Laden is the Antichrist. I wonder if three and a half years, or was it 1,260 days, started there.

You know what? Your ability to precisely nail down the details of eschatology will not sustain your faith in the crisis of those last days. It won't do it. You know what will do it? Having studied that enough to know God's got the dates, and God's in control, down to the day, that'll sustain your faith.

And that'll be there. So we study eschatology, we will study eschatology on Wednesday nights, we will study it, but I know good and well the fragility of your understanding of those details in Revelation and Matthew 24 and Daniel 7 and 9, your forgetfulness and your fallibility in understanding all those details won't carry your soul through death. And I'm very interested in helping people die.

Really interested. I want you to be able to die well. I want you to be able to choose to die.

So here you are on that plane, boy would I like to have seen the plane that went down in Pennsylvania. What went on in that plane? The choices they had to make. We choose to die here.

Would we really die? Maybe they're just going to go to Iran. Maybe they're just going to land it in Canada. The details of eschatology at that point, about whether this is the tribulation we're in right now, or whether three and a half years is this, or three and a half years is that, you're not going to have that worked out to the degree where you can specify any date so that you can say with sure footing, this is going to happen,

that's going to happen, and so I feel comforted by that.

You won't feel comforted by that because you might be wrong. You've got to have settled, solid, sovereign, gracious, good God ground under your feet. And all the questions you've tried to figure out over the years, you'll be in so much pain and so much anxiety you won't even be able to think about them.

Well, that's another thing. That's why it's hard for me to get worked up about some particular controversies. Step four.

Very important step leading to our climactic step five. What does the Bible claim for itself? Jesus' view of the Old Testament. Let me tell you what I'm going to skip here that I could do.

I'm going to skip the big section I have on the Old Testament's testimony to itself. All the places where the Old Testament claims to be the word of God speaking. It would just consume so much of our time, and I think we really need to get to step five.

You can track those down with your concordance. And I'm going to skip the apostles' self-claims. Because we did so much of that last night, arguing that Paul argued that he was speaking by the Spirit.

And said, measure your words by my words, and we've said enough about that to know that it's there. What I want to look at now is Jesus' view of Scripture. In particular, His Scriptures, the Old Testament.

And the reason for this is because if Jesus wins your trust, and that's why you'll become a Christian, if you're a real Christian, is that the person Jesus Christ, as He's revealed through the Scriptures, wins your trust in Himself as a person, as a friend, as a king, as a savior, as a wise counselor. He wins your trust. You know Him.

You know Him. And you trust Him, just like you trust your spouse, or your friend, or your mother, or your father. You trust Him because He's one, He's a person.

Now, once that happens, what He thinks about everything changes everything. And what He thinks about Scripture is massively significant. And Jesus thinks a lot about Scripture.

This is why, you see, some of you, I don't know where you're coming from or what your backgrounds are, but a lot of Americans, millions, don't even have a category for authority in their minds, let alone a category of written authority, let alone a category of religious written authority, to which they're going to bow every day. That way of thinking is just foreign. Whereas for Jesus, it was absolutely central.

There is authority in God. God has revealed Himself in history and given an authoritative interpretation of what He's doing in history in a canon of books, 24 or 39, depending on how you count them, Old Testament books. I, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, believe God has spoken there and guide my whole life by those books.

So that's what I want you to see. And the testimony to it, the evidence for it, is overwhelming. Now, if you say, as a skeptic would, this is just arguing a circle.

You know, you go into Jesus to find out that the Old Testament has authority. Well, how do you know Jesus has authority? Why do you get to credit Jesus' word about the Old Testament? That's just a circle. You're choosing to jump into the circle arbitrarily at Jesus, and then Jesus tells you the Old Testament's okay, and then the Old Testament tells you Jesus is coming, and so you've got this circle that you just

arbitrarily jumped into.

It's not quite like that. But I have to get ahead of myself here to say why. What I'm arguing is, somewhere and somehow, which we haven't explained yet, this Jesus, as He stands forth from the Bible, from the New Testament, from the Gospels, wins you authentically, compellingly, irrevocably for Himself, and vindicates in you His truthfulness and His word.

Now, you have to give an account of that. Why is that? Why do you love Him? Why do you trust Him? You must talk about that. But once that happens, it's no longer arbitrary that you would go to Him for how He thinks about Scripture.

That's where we're going to go now. And then we'll get to that other thing about why you credit Him. Why do you credit Jesus? How do you credit the word? Let's just see what He thinks.

And I've got a lot of these, so let's just move through them. Jesus believed the psalmist spoke by the Holy Spirit. Mark 12, 35.

Jesus answering began to say, as He taught in the temple, How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? David himself said, in or by the Holy Spirit. The Lord said to my Lord, and He quotes Psalm 110, Sit at my right hand. So, here's Jesus claiming that this word written by the psalmist was spoken in or by the Holy Spirit.

So there's a divine inspiration kind of comment, at least that part of the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus believed that what Moses wrote in the law, God Himself said. This is very subtle.

Listen carefully. Matthew 19, 3-6. Some Pharisees came to Him testing Him and saying, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all? And He answered and said, Have you not read that He who created them? God.

He who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, And then He quotes Genesis 2, 24, which is not a quotation of God. It's Moses' comment on the creation of Eve. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one.

That is an amazing thing. That Jesus in quoting Genesis 2, 4, which is a commentary by the human author on a divine event says, God said. This is why Calvin and so many others are willing to use the word dictation when they talk about the Old Testament.

I don't think they mean by that to eliminate the personality of the writer or his particular stylistic traits. They just mean there is a correlation between the divine mind and the human writing here that is so close you can say, God said that. God said that.

That's another instance of Jesus' sense of the authority of the Old Testament. Jesus put the authority of Scripture above Satan and above his own human preferences. So in the wilderness temptations, a tempter came, Matthew 4, 3. The tempter came and said to him, If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.

But he answered and said, It is written. So Jesus chooses to resist the devil, not with his own personal divine human authority, but with the words of God in the Old Testament, thus modeling, perhaps, for us how to do spiritual warfare. When we are tempted, man shall not live by bread alone, he quotes

Deuteronomy.

Jesus said to him, on the other hand, It is written. Then Jesus said to him, Be gone, Satan, for it is written. So here's the one opportunity for Jesus, as it were, to stand up, show his power, his might, his independent, unique authority, and he leans on the Bible to do it.

That's a powerful statement about the role of the Scriptures in Jesus' life. Jesus believed that all Scripture would be fulfilled. Matthew 5, 17.

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 away from the law until all is accomplished.

It can't get much more sweeping than that. The smallest letter or stroke. Little teeny Hebrew heuric.

Shall pass away from the law until all is accomplished. A lot of it was accomplished in Jesus, which is why, though it has divine authority, isn't applicable today. We do not sacrifice animals, for example, today.

We don't avoid certain kinds of unclean foods today. Because Jesus declared all foods clean. Jesus became our sacrificial lamb.

Jesus became our high priest. So all that absolute authoritative word came to its fulfillment in Jesus, and he believed it would, and he was calculating his life to make that happen, to vindicate the authority of God in the Old Testament. Jesus saw Moses and the prophets as speaking compelling truth on how to avoid hell.

Remember the story of the rich man and Lazarus. I have five brothers. This man's in torment now.

That he may warn them lest they come. Send somebody to my brothers to warn them. But Abraham, speaking from the bosom of the father in heaven, as they're having this little dialogue that we get a glimpse of, said, they have Moses and the prophets.

Let them hear them. But he said, no, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they'll repent. And he said to him, if they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.

That's a very high view of Moses and the prophets. If you don't listen to them, that must mean there's something in Moses and the prophets that's as compelling. If you had eyes to see as a resurrection from the dead.

So my mother, who's been dead for 26 years now, were to walk through that door back there. I should have no more sense of what she says being true than what I read in Moses. I should be able to go to Moses and the prophets and by the illumination and help of the Holy Spirit, come away from there with convictions as solid as if my mother appeared in this church on a Sunday morning, 24 years after she died and went to heaven.

That's an amazing statement. Which means we have some work to do, don't we? When we get to number five is, whoa, how do you arrive at that kind of solid, unshakable conviction? But we're on our way there. And I think Jesus spoke the way he spoke here, so that when in the 20th century you would read these things, you would find the Holy Spirit quickening your heart to say, if Jesus saw it that way, it must be that

way.

And God would just open you to feel the force. I think he did that for Billy Graham there in the mountains, out there in California, when he was in his 20s. Remember, he told the story over and over again.

He was getting criticized as a young evangelist about how naive he was, about biblical criticism and the authority of the Bible. He went out in the woods and laid his open Bible on a stump, his King James Bible, on a stump and knelt down and said, Oh God, I have so many unanswered questions. Help me.

Help me to discern. Is this your book? And God met him that night. I don't think he met him with a whisper.

I don't think that's what he says. Like, there was a voice that said, It's my book. And the voice itself now has the authority, not the book.

That's the danger of getting other revelations about the book. Then the voice has the authority, not the book. But rather the book, as it were, stood forth, vindicated itself, and he got off his knees and said, I will never again say anything but thus saith the Bible.

And that's pretty much the course he's held. You know, he goes on Jay Leno or Larry King over the years and just says, The Bible says. The Bible says.

And God's honored it. Billy Graham's not perfect. He and I have, I'm sure, some theological differences, and he's made some compromises I probably wouldn't have made, but he says, The Bible says.

And God seems to have honored that. Jesus believed that the small affirmations of Scripture cannot be broken. John 10, 33.

The Jews answered him, For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself out to be God. Jesus answered them, Has it not been written in your law, I said you are gods? If he called them gods, to whom the word came, and the Scripture cannot be broken, do you say of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, you are blaspheming because I said I am the Son of God? There's a lot to be talked about there that I don't want to get into, except just the Scripture cannot be broken, and it's almost a throwaway phrase. You are gods.

You are like angels. You are gods with a little g. It's kind of an argument from the lesser to the greater. You don't get bent out of shape when the Old Testament uses that language.

Why do you get bent out of shape when I use this language? Of course, there's a reason why they should get bent out of shape, but he's just calling their attention to some inconsistencies, and in it he says the Scripture cannot be broken. Jesus put the authority of Moses above the distortions of the scribes. Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses.

Therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds, for they say things and do not do them. This is Jesus' way of saying, even if a proud, arrogant, self-centered, and unbelieving Pharisee tells you what to do, and it comes from Moses, you do it. But don't you copy his life.

In other words, the Word of God can come right through a terrible means. There can be Elmer gantries. You know, don't you, that there are true stories of evangelists who are escaped convicts, who preach the Gospel to maintain the cover, and people get saved.

They don't believe anything they're saying, because the Word of God is living and active. It's like Paul sitting in jail, saying, well, some are preaching the Gospel out of love to me, because they are tender-hearted towards my bonds, and others are proud and arrogant and are trying to rub it in my face. And I just think, God, the Gospel is being preached.

I just think, that's just a view of the power of the Gospel. That's amazing. So Jesus had that view.

Paul had that view. Jesus taught that Moses' writings are to be believed. This is redundant, I guess.

John 5.39, You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. It is these that bear witness of me. Verse 46, For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me.

But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? That would be worth thinking about. Having your mind and heart so wrought upon by the Spirit that you comply with Moses, fits you to recognize me as true. Now, the same thing has to happen in your heart to recognize me as has to happen in your heart to see my word as true in Moses and the prophets.

There's a spiritual reality that had to happen there. And if it happened there, you'd recognize me. But if you don't recognize me, it hasn't happened.

You're using the book in an artificial way. Jesus contrasted the traditions of men with the word of God in the Old Testament. He was also saying to them, you nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.

You no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother, thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down. Now, there's a distinction between tradition and word of God written. And what the elders and the scribes and the chief priests and the Pharisees were doing with the word of God in creating all kinds of additional traditions that wound up coming around and nullifying the very word of God.

Oh, that's dangerous. I bet we've got some at Bethlehem. There's long traditions in the Baptist church or in American church.

And they have made their way so far out from the Bible that they're starting to come around and torpedo the very authority of God himself in some way. Oh, how we need to ask, where are those in my life? What have I embraced in my life that feels like a nice Christian tradition but is undermining the very commandment of God in my life? But the point here is the word is held out and up by Jesus with authority over against everything, even the most religious tradition. Jesus believed that knowing the scriptures would keep you from doctrinal error.

This is the situation of whether the Sadducees could trick him into making a fool of himself because he believed in the resurrection of the dead, which they didn't. And so the way they go about it is to say if a man's brother dies and leaves behind a wife, this is Mark 12, 19, and leaves no child, his brother should take the wife and raise up. So there were seven brothers and the first took a wife.

And then they all died, had the same wife. Now she dies, goes to heaven, and now she's a what? Polygamist. Ha, ha, ha.

We got you. Polygamy and the resurrection. What's in there with that? You believe her in the stupid resurrection? Resurrection does nothing but create problems, like polygamy.

It's like my father. My father remarried a year after my mother died. So is it Ruth Piper or is it Levon Piper that he's going to be married to in the kingdom? Who's going to be my father's wife in the resurrection? Jesus says, is this not the reason you are mistaken that you do not understand Scripture? If you knew your Bibles better, you wouldn't make errors about the resurrection like this.

You ought to know your Bibles better. Well, he's talking to some pretty, pretty Bible-saturated people. But what this says to me is his category of Scripture is just huge.

I mean, he lives by it. He solves doctrinal questions by it. And he adds this.

You do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God. And then he gives his answer to them. There ain't no marriage in the kingdom.

Yeah. You'd be like angels in heaven. So sorry, you know, you young folks who are so much in love with one another and old folks who are so much in love with one another.

It's not going to be the same. It's just not going to be the same. I think it will be as good and better in ways that we can't imagine, but it's not going to be a problem for my father to relate to Ruth Piper, my mother, and Levon Piper, my stepmother, or this woman who had seven husbands.

That's not going to be a moral problem and it's not going to be an ethical problem because things are going to be so different relationally. In the resurrection they do not marry or are given in marriage. I don't know how.

It'll just be better. Heaven is not a step backwards. I promise you.

Jesus devoted His life to fulfilling the Scriptures about the Messiah. For example, His face was set to Jerusalem. He took the twelve aside and said to them, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem.

All things written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. So Jesus didn't just happen to fall into the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He knew the Old Testament was about Him.

You read in those Scriptures, you'd think there you wouldn't read about Me. Well, you do read about Me. And I read about Me.

And I know exactly what I have to do. I've got to go to Jerusalem. That's where it's all going to happen.

So He loves this book, esteems this book. God wrote this book. God wrote His drama for the end of His life and He's going to fulfill every jot and tittle of it intentionally.

Cleansing of the temple. He began to teach them if He drove them out. Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you've made it a den of robbers.

His ministry itself is a fulfillment of Old Testament. You have that passage in Luke 4.16 following where He comes into the temple and He reads this text from Isaiah. The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me.

He closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down and the eyes of all were fixed upon Him. And He said, Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. He knows and He's planning that

the Scriptures find their fulfillment in Him.

So that's a crucial role that they are playing for Him. The ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist are being played out according to the Scripture. They ask Him saying, Why is it that the scribes and Elijah must come first? And He said to them, Elijah does come and restore all things.

And yet, how is it written? Is it written of the Son of Man that He should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come and they did to Him whatever they wished just as it is written of Him. So the Son of Man's coming is written about. John the Baptist or Elijah's coming is written about.

Jesus saw His betrayal as the fulfillment of Scripture. Mark 14.21 The Son of Man is to go just as it is written of Him. And so on.

I don't know if I need to belabor all of these. There are just so many things that Jesus does in His last days that are intentional and explicit fulfillments of Scripture. So let's jump to here.

Jesus taught that we should not be slow to believe all that the Old Testament prophets have spoken. Luke 24.25 He said to them, O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken. Believe it all.

You're foolish not to believe it all. You're slow of heart not to believe it all. Believe it all.

This is Jesus talking. What a powerful and extensive crediting of the Old Testament. So there's a taste of Jesus' take on the Old Testament Scriptures.

Now, the next... I'll stop here and see if I have a question, but let me tell you where you can go and then we'll take a break. The next thing I'm going to do is talk about... This is step five that we're going to move into. How do we credit Paul's testimony to be speaking by the Holy Spirit and thus trustworthy about what he says about Jesus? And the next thing we'll do is to talk about the traits of the Bible that give it credibility.

And then we're going to close with talking about John Calvin's understanding of the testimony of the Holy Spirit and whether it has a biblical foundation under it. Questions about Jesus' view of the Old Testament or anything we just looked at for the last 30 minutes or so? Well, it's... I'm not just sure what statement... I am he? Is that... I am he? I think probably whenever Jesus used one of those I am statements, he was alluding to, in a veiled way, to his identification with God. Is that just... you wanted to point that out? Right.

I think that's true. There are certain ones that are obviously true. Before Abraham was, I am.

Whoa! I remember reading that in seminary and going home and writing a poem about it, which was published in Christian Life magazine, which doesn't exist anymore. They were scraping the barrel in those days. And they died soon after.

But I just tried to imagine walking along with a man. He just looks like me. He talks like me.

He gets hungry like me. And he looks over his shoulder on the way down the road. He says, before Abraham was, I am.

I mean, he's crazy. He's either crazy or I'm trembling that I'm walking beside an event in history that will never happen before, will never happen again. It's God Almighty coming down in human flesh.

And that's the choice we are supposed to confront America with. Anything else before we take a break? Right. Right.

That's a good point. Let me see if I can restate that for the tape and you. That in the passage in Jude, Glenn is pointing out that it looks in the flow of the thought as if Enoch, which is an allusion to intertestamental work, is quoting it as history and doesn't demur that he doesn't give any indication that he doesn't consider authoritative.

And all I said last night was he doesn't quote it by saying it is written. So I'm not sure. I'm not sure what to say.

I'm going to have to go back there and look because I didn't look those several up. I just went with what I had seen before and said that much. But now you're asking if I can say more about whether it actually is considered by Jude as a truth about something Enoch said.

Did he have some way of knowing that this is something that Enoch thought or said? But it's not fresh enough in my mind. Did you have a thought about it? You're just curious. Okay, I don't have an answer for that right now.

Let me ponder it and if I get one before we're done, I'll tell you more. And if any of you have ideas, you can tell me. What are the verses people can go look at? Okay, Jude 14 and 15.

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