

The Voice of R.A. Torrey: 'Is The Bible the Word of God?'

by R.A. Torrey

This sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the Bible as the Word of God, highlighting the journey of personal doubt and exploration that led to a firm belief in its divine origin. It delves into the testimony of Jesus Christ regarding the Scriptures, showcasing how His authority validates the Old and New Testaments as God's Word. The sermon challenges the audience to consider the unparalleled credentials of Jesus Christ, including His divine life, words, works, influence on history, and resurrection, as irrefutable evidence supporting the Bible as the Word of God.

Scripture: Mark 7:13, Matthew 5:18, John 10:35, Luke 24:27, John 14:26, John 16:13, John 5:47, Luke 16:31, John 14:26, John 5:23, John 10:30, John 14:9

Topics: "Authority of Scripture", "Validation through Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Where is the Bible, the Word of God? If the Bible is the Word of God, an absolutely trustworthy revelation from God Himself, of Himself, His purposes and His ways, of man's beauty and destiny, of spiritual and eternal reality, then we have a starting point from which we can proceed to the concept of the whole domain of religious truth. But if the Bible is not the Word of God, if it is a mere product of man's thinking, speculating and guessing, not altogether trustworthy in regard to religious and eternal truth, then we are all astute, not knowing whether we are drifting, but we may be sure that we are not drifting toward any safe course. I did not always believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

I sincerely doubted that the Bible was the Word of God. I doubted that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. I doubted whether there was a person with God.

I was not a reasonable, I was a skeptic. I did not deny, I questioned. I was not an atheist, I was an agnostic.

I did not know, but I determined to find out. If there was a God, I determined to find that out. And that's accordingly.

If there was not a God, I determined to find that out. And that's accordingly. If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, I determined to find that out.

And that's accordingly. If Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, I determined to find that out. And that's accordingly.

If the Bible was the Word of God, I determined to find that out. And that's accordingly. And if the Bible was not the Word of God, I determined to find that out.

Accordingly, I found out beyond the first venture that there is a God, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that the Bible is the Word of God. Today it's really not a matter of mere probability or even of mere belief, but of absolute certainty. I'm going to give you some of the reasons why I believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

Not all the reasons, it will take one to do that. Some of the reasons which are the most confusing to me personally, for these are of such a personal and experimental character that they cannot be conveyed to another. What I will give you is that the truth can speak to any candidate for their act of the truth, to anyone who desires to know the truth and who is willing to obey it.

We will not convince one who is determined not to know the truth, or who is unwilling to obey it. If one will not receive the love of the truth, he must be left to his own deliberate point of error, and given over to strong delusions of the means of life. But if one is searching for the truth, no matter how completely he's in the fog today, he can be led into the truth.

I believe the Bible to be the Word of God, first of all, because of the testimony of Jesus Christ to that fact. Why is there a day in which many men say that they accept the teaching of Jesus Christ, but that they do not accept the teaching of the whole Bible? They say that they believe what Jesus Christ said, but as to what Moses said, or is said to have said, and what Isaiah said, or is said to have said, and what Jeremiah said, and Stupal said, and John said, and the rest of the Bible writers, they do not know about that. Now this position may at first glance seem rational, but in point of fact it is utterly irrational.

If we accept the teaching of Jesus Christ, we must accept the whole Bible. For Jesus Christ has set his stance of his authority upon the entire book, and if we accept his authority, we must accept all that upon which he sets the stance of his authority. That the Christ's endorsement of the Old Testament turn first of all to Mark 7, verse 2. Jesus has substituted for the law of Moses, not merely from the Ten Commandments, but from other portions of the law of Moses as well.

He has set over against the teaching of the law of Moses the traditions of the Pharisees and the scribes. In this verse he says, we will make the word of God of none effect through your tradition. Now here he distinctly calls the law of Moses the word of God.

It is often times said that the Bible nowhere claims to be the word of God. Now here Jesus Christ himself distinctly asserts that the law of Moses is the word of God. If then we accept the authority of Jesus Christ,

we must accept the law of Moses as the word of God.

Of course this only covers the first five books of the Old Testament. But if we can accept this as the word of God, we will have no difficulty with the rest of the Old Testament. For it is here that the utter battle is being fought today.

Turn again to Matthew 5.18. Here Jesus says, Now every Hebrew scholar knows that a yachet is the Hebrew character yachet, the smallest character in the Hebrew alphabet. Less than half the size of any other character in the Hebrew alphabet. In the example of the little horn that the Hebrews put on their tonsils, here Jesus asserts that the law of Moses, as originally given, is absolutely inalienable down to its smallest letter and part of the letter.

If then we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we must accept the authority of the law of Moses as originally given, and as contained in the Old Testament scriptures. Turn next to John 10.35. Turn again to Luke 24.27. And in the 44th verse he says, Now every scholar knows that the Jews, who write in their Bible, our present Old Testament scriptures, the Law, the first five books of the Old Testament, the Prophets, which are the books which we call prophetic and some of those which we call historical, and the remaining books of the Old Testament, the Psalms, or sacred writings. Jesus Christ takes up each one of these three recognized divisions of these Old Testament scriptures, and sets the stamp of his authority upon each one of them.

If then we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we are driven logically to accept the entire Old Testament scriptures. From Luke 16.31 Jesus says, Thus in the most emphatic way endorsing the truth of the Old Testament scriptures. In John 5.47 Jesus says, And how about the New Testament? Did Jesus set the stamp of his authority upon it also? He did.

But how could he that not a book of the New Testament was written when he departed from this earth? He delivered it by way of anticipation. Turn to John 14.26. And you will hear Jesus saying, Whatsoever I have said unto you. Thus setting the stamp of his authority, not only upon the apostolic teaching and given by the Holy Spirit, but upon the apostolic recollection of what he himself had taught.

The question is often asked, how will you know that in the Gospel record you have an accurate reading about some of the teachings of Jesus Christ? It is asked, did the apostles take notes at the time of what Jesus said? There is reason to believe that they did. Matthew and Peter, from whom Mark derived his material, and Cain, from whom there is reason to believe Luke obtained much of his material, took notes of what Jesus said in Aramaic, and that John took notes of what Jesus said in Greek, and that we have in the four Gospels the reports of what they took down at the time. But whether this be true or not does not matter for our purposes, for we have Christ's own authority for it, that in the apostolic record we have not the apostles' recollection of what Jesus said, but the Holy Spirit's recollection of what Jesus said.

And while the apostles might forget and report inaccurately, the Holy Spirit should not forget. Learn furthermore to John 16, 12, and 13, in view of where Jesus may be, I have much, many things to say unto you, but ye cannot share them now. Of which, indeed, the Spirit of truth is done, and He will guide you into all truth.

Here Jesus sets the stamp of His authority upon the teaching of the apostles, as being given by the Holy Spirit, as containing all the truth, and as containing more truth than His own teaching. He tells the apostles that He has many things that He knows to tell them, but that they are not ready yet to receive them. But

that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will guide them into this fuller and larger truth.

If then we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we must accept the apostolic teaching, the New Testament language, as being given through the Holy Spirit, as containing all the truth, and as containing more truth than Jesus taught while on earth. There are many in our day who cry, Back to Christ! Back to Christ! By which they usually mean, we do not care what Paul taught, or what John taught, or what James taught, or what Henry taught. We do not know about them unless we back to Christ, the original source of authority, and accept what He taught, and that alone.

Very well, back to Christ. The cry is not a bad one. But when you get back to Christ, you hear Christ Himself saying, On to the apostles.

They have more truth to teach than I have taught. The Holy Spirit has taught them all the truth. Listen to them.

If then we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we are driven to accept the authority of the entire New Testament. So then, if we accept the teaching of Jesus Christ, we must accept the entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament. It is either Christ and the whole Bible, or no Bible and no Christ.

There are some in these days who say that they believe in Christ, but not in the Christ of the New Testament. But there is no Christ but the Christ of the New Testament. Any other Christ than the Christ of the New Testament is a pure figment of the imagination.

Any other Christ than the Christ of the New Testament is an idol, made by man's own handshake, and whoever worships Him is an idolater. But we must accept the authority of Jesus Christ. He is accredited to us by five unmistakable divine testimonies.

First, Christ is accredited to us by the testimony of the divine life that He lived, for He lived as never man lived. When a man takes the four Gospels for himself and reads them carefully and candidly, he will soon be convinced of two things. First, that He's reading the story of a life actually lived.

Because no man should have imagined the character there set forth unless the life had been actually lived. Much less could four men have imagined the character, each one of the four making his own account of that character, not only consistent with himself but consistent with the other three. To suppose that these four men who wrote the Gospels imagined the life here set forth would be to suppose a greater miracle than any recorded in the Gospels.

To see in the second place that the life here set forth is apart from all other human lives, that it stands by itself, that it is manifestly a divine life lived under human interdiction. Napoleon Bonaparte was a good judge of men. He once said regarding the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels which he had been reading, I know men.

And Jesus Christ was not a man. What he meant was, of course, that Jesus Christ was not a leader man. Secondly, Jesus Christ is accredited to us by the divine words that he spoke.

If anyone will study the teaching of Jesus Christ with tender and faithfulness, you will soon see that it has a character that distinguishes it from all other teachings ever uttered upon the earth. Third, Jesus Christ was accredited to us by the divine works that he walked. Not only healing the sick as many others have done, but cleansing the leper, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, filling the tempest by a word,

turning water into wine, and feeding 5,000 with five small loaves and two small chickens.

It was a creative act. These miracles of power are clear credentials of God's coming to teach. If you are not committed and candid, you have not come to the same conclusion as this human being.

You know the power to teach here comes from God, for no man can do these signs that are due to it except God be with him. Of course we bear in mind the fact that strenuous efforts have been made to eliminate the supernatural elements from the story of the life of Jesus Christ. But all these efforts have resulted in failure, and all similar efforts must result in failure.

One of the most simple efforts of this kind that he has ever made was that of the great German theologian, David Strauss, in his *Raven New Feast*. David Strauss is a man of remarkable ability and wits, a man of real and profound scholarship, a man of movable genius, a man of singular power of critical analysis, a man of indomitable perseverance in untiring industry. He brought to bear all the rare gifts of his richly endowed time upon the story of the life of Jesus, with a determination to discredit the miraculous elements therein he contains.

He has spent his best years in strength in this effort. If anyone could have succeeded in such an effort, he would have been strumped with a man, but he failed utterly. For a time it seemed to many that he had succeeded in his purpose, and when his life in Jesus was itself sufficient for rigid critical analysis to tell all the pieces, he today is utterly discredited, and those who wish to eliminate the miraculous elements in the story of Jesus feel that they must make the attempt anew, since the attempt is fraught and comes to nothing.

For as Strauss failed to print like the earnest renowned tried again, he had not by any means the ability and genius of Strauss, but he was a man of brilliant genius, of proper imagination, of rare look-around skills, and of singular adroitness and finesse. He, you may say he, was read with interest and admiration by many. The work was done with fascinating skill.

Some fancied that Renaud had succeeded in his attempt, but his life in Jesus, naturally enough, was discredited even in a shorter time than that of Strauss. All other attempts had met with a similar fate. It is an attempt absolutely impossible.

Let any candid man take the life of Jesus and read it for himself with attention and care, he will soon discover that the life there pictured could not have been imagined, but must have been really lived. If the teachings reported as uttered by Jesus are no fictitious teachings put into the mouth of a fictitious person, but the real utterances of a real person, he will also discover that the character and teachings set forth in the Gospels are inextricably interwoven with the stories of the miracles. He will find that if you eliminate the miracles, the character and the teachings disappear.

That the character and the teachings cannot be separated from the miraculous elements without a violent impeachment that no reasonable man will permit. Today, this much at least is proven. That Jesus lived and walked substantially as is recorded in the four Gospel records of his life.

Personally, I believe that more than this is proven, but this is enough for our present purpose. If Jesus lived and walked substantially as the Gospels record, cleansing the lepers, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, filling the tempest with his word, feeding the five thousands and the five small loaves and the three small chickens, then he bears unthinkable credentials as God comes forth to teach. Fourth,

Jesus Christ is also accredited to us by his divine influence upon all consciousnesses.

Jesus Christ was beyond colored men to one of three things. He was either the Son of God in a human sense, a divine person incarnate in human form, or else he was the most merrier imposter that ever lived, or else one of the most hopeless lunatics. That he claimed to be the Son of God in a human sense and that all men should honor him even as they honored the Father, as he said in John 5.23, and that he and the Father were one, as he said in John 10.30, and that he that had seen him had seen the Father, as he said in John 14.9, of this there can be no honest doubt.

Jesus was then either the divine person that he claimed to be, or the most merrier imposter, or a most hopeless lunatic. Was his influence upon subsequent history the influence of a lunatic? No one but a lunatic would say so. Was his influence upon subsequent history the influence of an imposter? No one but one whose own heart was thoroughly tainted with deceit and fraud would think of saying so.

Not an imposter? Not a lunatic? We have only one alternative left. He was what he claimed to be, the Son of God, God the Father. Since Jesus Christ is accredited to us by his resurrection from the dead, I shall also show you at another time the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

You will see that historic evidence for the resurrection of Christ is absolutely convincing in its character, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is one of the best proven facts of history. But the resurrection of Christ will not seem to Christ strange. It isn't Christ strange for being the Son of God, God the Son.

He was put to death for making that claim. Before being put to death, he said that God would set his soul to the flame by raising him from the dead. They killed him.

They laid him in the supper-chair. They rolled his soul into the door of the supper-chair. They sealed that door with the Roman seal, which would break one's death.

And when the appointed hour of which Christ had spoken came, the breath of God swept through the speaking day. And Jesus rose, triumphant over death. And God spoke more clearly than if he could speak from the open heavens today and say, this is my beloved Son, hear ye him.

We must then, if we are honest, accept the authority of Jesus Christ. But if we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we must accept the entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament as being the Word of God. Therefore, I believe the Bible to be the Word of God because of the testimony of Jesus Christ to that effect.

A true criticism has arisen that assumes to set up its authority against the authority of Jesus Christ. They say, for example, Jesus says that the 110th Psalm was by David and was Messianic. And we say that the 110th Psalm is neither by David nor is it Messianic.

They ask us to give up the authority and infallibility of Jesus Christ and the Bible and accept their authority and their infallibility in their faith. Very well, but before doing it, we demand their credentials. We do not yield to the claim of authority and infallibility of anyone until he presents his credentials.

Jesus Christ presents his credentials. First of all, he presents the credentials of the divine fact that he is. What have they to place in comparison with that? Well, we hear much about the beauty of the life of some of the school critics.

We have no desire to deny the claim. But against the beauty of their lives, we put the life of Jesus. Which suffers by the comparison? If there is any force in the argument that the man's life is in the right and doctrine cannot be in the wrong, and there is force in the argument that bears immeasurably more for the authority of Jesus Christ than it does for the authority of any critic or school of critics.

Second, Jesus presents the credentials of the divine words that he spoke. What have they to put up against that? The words of Jesus Christ have put forth the text of 19th century to shine out with greater luster and glory today than ever. What school of criticism has ever stood the test of 19th century? If one has to choose between the teaching of Christ and that of any school of criticism, it will not take any thoroughly sane man long to choose.

Third, Jesus Christ presents his third credentials, the divine works that he wrought, the unmistakable seal of God upon its side. What has the school of criticism to put up against that? Absolutely nothing. It has no miracles.

But miracles of literary ingenuity in the attempt to make the preposterous appear historical. Fourth, Jesus Christ presents the credential of his influence upon human history. We all know what the influence of Jesus Christ was then, how divine and how divine.

Everything that is best in modern civilization, everything that is best in national, domestic, and individual life is due to the influence of Jesus Christ. Perhaps we also know the influence of the school of criticism. We know that it is deepening the power of ministers and Christian workers everywhere.

We know that it is emptying churches. We know that it is defeating missionary treasuries. We know that it is paralyzing missionary efforts in every field where it has gone.

I know this by personal observation and not by hearsay. This may not be their intention. Which, for a moment, it is not their intention.

But nonetheless, it is a fact. The influence of Jesus has been thoroughly beneficent. The influence of this school of criticism is utterly bad.

Fifth, Jesus presents his fifth credential, his resurrection from the dead. What has the school of criticism to put up over against that? Nothing, whatever. Jesus Christ established, he said, the opposing school of criticism stands dumb.

Therefore we refuse to bow to the assumed and unsubstantiated authority and infallibility of any school of criticism, of any priest, or pope, or theological professor. But most credulously, we will bow to the authority and infallibility of Jesus Christ, so completely proven. And upon his authority, we accept the entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament as these words of God.

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