

The Sermon on the Mount
What your View of Scripture Says About You (Part 2)

Matthew 5:17-20

March 4, 2012

Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher

Countryside Bible Church

www.countrysidebible.org

Well I invite you to turn with me again to the Sermon on the Mount and to Matthew 5. We've really just begun our journey over the last few months through this wonderful sermon of our Lord's. And we have just started the body of the sermon. The body of the sermon really begins in 5:17, and I've shown you the structure before, so I won't belabor that again.

As we come to this text again this morning, I want you to begin with an understanding that lying behind every claim of truth in our world today, back of every truth claim that exists, there is a foundational authority: the place where that philosophy or that religion stands--the person or persons, or the writings, or the ideas to which they ultimately appeal as their authority. In fact, when you're speaking with someone about what they believe, this is a great place to start. Ask them the question, who or what is the authority for what you believe? Who or what is the authority for your view of reality? Understand that everyone, no matter what they believe, has some kind of an authority—a foundational authority, that is their basis for believing their view of reality. That's true of every person here this morning. In fact, let me challenge you to ask yourself this question. What is the ultimate authority for what I believe?

There are many different sources of authority in our world. Some would hold their authority to be some sacred writing. For example Buddhism is based on the sayings of Buddha that have been inscripturated for them. Muslims would base their authority on the prophecy of Mohammed and the Koran, Mormonism on the writings of Joseph Smith, and so forth. There are other sacred writings. For many in our culture, they are naturalists. That is, they embrace the philosophy of naturalism which says the cosmos is all that there is or ever has been or ever will be. For them, the authority is really the cosmos itself interpreted by the priests of their religion who are humanistic scientists. Empiricism argues that the ultimate authority is the human senses, rationalism says human reason. And on it goes. But for most people in our culture it's not quite so articulate and defined as that. In fact, I would say this: for most people in our culture, most of the people with whom you rub shoulders every day, they are their own ultimate authority.

The world is increasingly filled with people who create their own unique religion or philosophy. I mean after all, we have designer clothes, we have designer dogs. Why not designer faith. They just look at all of the available ideas, all of the available philosophies and religions as kind of a

buffet restaurant. A buffet line in which you go through and you select the parts that seem right to you and that you like—that appeal to you. Oh, I'll have a little Christianity. Yeah, I like Jesus. You know, I think He's a wonderful person and there are some great things in the Bible. I'll have some of that. Give me some of that. Oh, and you know, I like the experientialism of Eastern Mysticism so throw some of that on my plate as well, and oh, I really like that part of post-modernism that says that truth and ethics are relative, and so I'll take some of that too. That's how a huge percentage of Americans approach what they believe. It's a kind of a Mr Potato Head approach to religion and faith. I take the parts I like and I put them where I want them, and that's what I believe. Now, if you take that approach, what is the real source of your authority? What is it? It's yourself. It's your own mind. Ultimately, your authority in that approach must either be your own reasoning, or perhaps what you determine to be the reasoning of a consensus of people that you respect. So on the sole basis of your belief in either your own mind or in the reasoning of the minds of a consensus of others, you are staking your eternal life and destiny ultimately on yourself.

Well, what about for us as believers? What's our authority? What is the ultimate source of authority for us? You might be tempted to say the Bible. And that's true as far as it goes, but it doesn't go quite far enough. Because the next question is obviously, why do we believe the Bible? The primary reason you and I believe the Bible is Jesus Christ. We believe the Old Testament because He quoted it often and He affirmed it to be the very words of the living God. We believe the New Testament because Jesus pre-authenticated it by choosing the very men who would write it—or under whose auspices it would be written. So our ultimate authority then, is Jesus Christ. And in reality, that's the point Jesus is making as He opens the body of His message in this Sermon on the Mount. Jesus essentially says, as My disciples, you must believe about the Bible exactly what I do, and because I do. That's really the major thrust of the opening paragraph of the body of this sermon. We've really just begun to study it.

Turn with me to Matthew 5:17 and let me read the paragraph for you. This is what 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. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Now we have encapsulated the real thrust of this paragraph in this brief summary. A true subject of Jesus' spiritual kingdom will always have a right relationship to the scripture. A true Christian

can always be recognized by how he or she responds to the scripture. I noted for you last time, just to give you sort of a roadmap for where we were headed, that Jesus identifies in this paragraph three responses to scripture that should characterize every genuine believer. In verse 17 He says we must understand Jesus' relationship to the scripture. In verse 18 we must believe Jesus' view of the scripture, and in verses 19 and 20 we must accept Jesus' diagnosis with the scripture. By that I mean, Jesus says your response to scripture diagnoses your spiritual condition. It shows whether you are in the kingdom but least, in the kingdom but great, or not in the kingdom at all.

Now last time we looked at the first response that we should have to the scripture, and it's this. Understand Jesus' relationship to the scripture. There was a lot of confusion about how He might relate to all of the revelation that had come before, and Jesus wants to clear that confusion up with his disciples, so in verse 17 He says, “do not think. . .” I don't want you thinking like this about My relationship to the scriptures. “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”

Now when Jesus preached this sermon there was already a definitive list of books that were accepted in the first century as having been breathed out by God. What were those books? Well, Jesus calls them, there in verse 17, the Law and the Prophets. As we learned last time in detail, the books to which Jesus referred—those books which constituted the Jewish canon of the first century--contained exactly the same content (although the numeration of the books was different) as in our English old Testament today. The 39 books identified as the Old Testament in your Bible were considered in Jesus' time undeniably, unequivocally, to be the inspired scriptures. And Jesus here identifies those 39 books that we call the Old Testament as being God's very words to us. Specifically, Jesus makes two points about how we who are His followers are to understand His relationship to those scriptures.

First of all, (we noted this last time) He said He did not come to abolish the Old Testament. Jesus is saying, don't you for a moment believe the common misperception that I have come (literally to demolish) to tear down in My teaching, the place and authority of the Old Testament scriptures. Moreover, He said, I came to fulfill the Old Testament. We looked last time at what that means. I think it's a term which is in itself full of meaning. I think He was saying three things when He said He came to fulfill it. And these are confirmed by other places in scripture. First of all, He fulfilled it by bringing out the complete meaning of scripture in His teaching. He filled out its meaning. He's going to do that right here in the Sermon on the Mount, in the weeks and months ahead. He fulfilled it secondly by perfectly obeying it in His life. And He fulfilled it thirdly by bringing the full message of the Old Testament to complete fruition in His own life and ministry. Or to put it differently, Jesus explained the Old Testament in His teaching, He obeyed the Old Testament in His life, and He embodied the Old Testament in His person. He

embodied all of those ideas and ceremonies and those pictures in His own person. He was the fulfillment of them.

Now that brings us to the second response that all of us who truly belong to Jesus' kingdom should have toward the scripture. Not only must we understand Jesus' relationship to it as explained in verse 17, but secondly we must believe Jesus' view of the scripture. Notice verse 18. "For (*now notice the connecting word, this is joining us back to verse 17, here's the reason. Jesus did not come to tear down, to demolish the Old Testament, but to fulfill it. Here's why.*) For truly, I say to you" Stop there. That is one of the most familiar sayings that our Lord used to introduce some of His most strategic comments. The Greek word for *truly* is a Hebrew word that has simply been transliterated into Greek. In fact, it's a Hebrew word you know. You may not know that you know it, but you know it. It's the Hebrew word *amen*. Did you know that was a Hebrew word? It is. It's a Hebrew word. In the Greek text, it reads *ah-mane* but it's basically just carried straight from Hebrew into the Greek text. It's translated here as *truly*. The word *amen* refers to a statement that is firm and reliable. When it comes at the end of a sentence, it could be translated either *let it be true*, or *it is true*. Occasionally, in a service like this you'll hear a song or you'll hear something I say, and you'll respond to it with *amen*. At least some of you have a little Baptist blood in your background. What are you saying? You're using a Hebrew word. You're saying that's true. That's exactly right. That exactly corresponds to reality. That's what you're saying. Now at the beginning of the sentence, as Jesus uses it here, combined with *I say to you*, and our Lord often puts it this way. In fact in John's gospel He often doubles it. *Amen Amen, I say to you*. I think some 25 times in John's gospel He puts it that way. When you put those together it could loosely be translated in English something like this. Listen to me, let me tell you the way things really are. That's what Jesus is saying. Here is the way it is. This is *amen*. This is firm, reliable, certain. What I'm about to tell you will not be changed or altered. In the gospels it is Jesus' unique way to add *veritas* and weight and solemnity to the statement that He makes. Jesus, in fact, uses this expression *truly I say to you* or *amen I say to you* 31 times in Matthew's gospel. Here, He uses it to punctuate and underline His view of scripture. Jesus here tells us what He himself believed about the Old Testament, and what we should therefore, as well, believe. And He does so in one of the most powerful and compelling statements Jesus ever made. Matthew records it for us in the rest of verse 18. Look at it again. Verse 18 "For *amen (reliable, trustworthy, this is the way it is)* 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." Wow. Just let that sink into your mind for a moment. That is not a statement to read past quickly. That is a profound, life-changing statement from the mouth of our Lord.

Now, notice, instead of repeating the expression *the Law or the Prophets* that He used back in verse 17, He simply shortens it in verse 18 to *the Law*. And yet He is still talking about the Old Testament in its entirety. The word *law* is often used in the New Testament to speak of the entire scripture. Let me just give you a couple of examples so you don't take my word for it. You can

look later at John 10:34, John 12:34, John 15:25. All of those refer to Psalms and call them *the Law*; it's written in the *Law*. In 1 Corinthians 14:21 Paul quotes from Isaiah and calls it what was written in *the Law*. And in Romans 3:19, you remember that list of verses Paul strings together to indict all of humanity (no one is righteous not one, and so forth, and he talks about man's sinfulness) and a series of references taken from both the Psalms and the Prophets, and he calls that *The Law*; in *the Law* it's written. So in verse 18 Jesus is still talking about the entire Old Testament scripture. In the statement that follows, Jesus affirms in the strongest possible terms His confidence in several unchanging attributes of the scripture.

You and I must believe about the scripture what Jesus believes about the scripture, and He's going to tell us in this verse what He believes about the scripture, and specifically several unchanging attributes that are true of the scripture. Let's look at those attributes together. The first attribute that Jesus identifies, let's call its *permanent authority*. Notice what He says in verse 18. "Amen, I'm saying to you, until heaven and earth pass away." It is forever. It is permanent. Now, there are two possibilities as far as what Jesus means by that expression. He may be referring to the actual day that is coming when the present heavens (the universe as we know it) and earth will be completely destroyed. Did you know that day is coming? Peter describes it. Here's how he describes it in 2 Peter 3:10. "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat and the earth and its works will be burned up." --be consumed, be destroyed. This universe as we know it is not permanent. It is a disposable universe. So Jesus may be saying that God's word will endure as long as this present universe stands—until it's completely destroyed. That's possible.

But I think it's more likely that Jesus is using these words as a proverb. A proverbial statement that really means never. It would be the polite version of the rather vulgar English expression *until hell freezes over*. It's never going to happen. Now the reason I think this is what Jesus means is how He uses this expression in a similar context. Listen to Luke 16:17. He says this "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail" You see how He uses it there. It's easier. Clearly, in that context Jesus is contrasting the likelihood of heaven and earth being destroyed with the likelihood of any part of the Law being destroyed or annulled. And Jesus says it is far easier for the universe as we know it to go out of existence entirely, than for the smallest stroke of a letter of God's word to fail. In other words, God's word is more enduring than the universe itself.

What do you think around you is the most stable thing in this world as we know it? You might be tempted to say, you know, those great old trees. Well, we saw this last weekend on the news what happens to those trees. They're certainly not stable and enduring. They can be swept away in a moment with the power of a tornado. Maybe you might be tempted to think, it's the hills, the mountains themselves, but they're not always forever. We've seen the mountains eroded by a

massive volcano as they just melt away. It's not the elements you learned in chemistry class. It's not the planet itself. The most stable unchanging reality on this planet anywhere is that Bible that you hold in your hand. According to Jesus Himself, it is the one thing that will survive when everything around us is fully destroyed. That's what He's saying. It's permanent. It's unchanging. It's unwavering. It is eternal. It is our rock of Gibraltar.

So many texts of scripture make this point. Let me just point out a couple to you. In Psalm 119, the Psalmist celebrates this again and again, but notice a couple of them. Psalm 119:89. the Psalmist writes "Forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven" Your word, literally, stands firm in heaven. It's not tied to this planet. It's not tied to what may happen here, whether it continues to exist or someday You destroy it. Your word is forever settled, and it stands firm in heaven itself. Not in the heavens in which our stars and the solar systems, galaxies function, but the heaven in which God himself appears. Notice verse 152. "Of old I have known from Your testimonies that You have founded them forever." They're forever. What about Isaiah 40:8. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever." Listen, things on this planet change. This planet itself will one day disappear, but the word of God is the one stable permanent enduring thing.

Now, as remarkable as that is, what's even more remarkable to me is that Jesus says the same thing about His own words. Turn over to Matthew 24. During the Olivet discourse, as Jesus talks about the end--we're studying Mark's version of this on Sunday night. But as Jesus talks about all the things that will come in the future, in Matthew 24:35 He says this. "Heaven and earth will pass away, (*they're going to go out of existence*) but My words will not pass away." Think about that for a moment. Jesus says to the people standing around him. You see all this stuff. It's going to disappear. It's going to go away, God's going to destroy it. But what I say to you never will. Wow.

You remember the Old Testament prophets, how they used to introduce their prophecies? Thus says the Lord. Jesus says, I say to you. Of course, this same authority goes not only for the Old Testament, not only for Jesus, but for the rest of what we call the New Testament, the rest of the scripture. For the writings of the apostles as well. I don't have time to take you there, but in 1 Corinthians 14 Paul says the churches must acknowledge that he and the other apostles wrote the commands of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 11:2 and 2 Thessalonians 2:5, churches are bound to obey the apostles commands, including the written word. In 2 Thessalonians 3:6 and verse 14, those who refuse to obey the apostles words are to be put out of the church. That's how much permanent authority the words of the apostles had, because ultimately they came from Christ Himself. So understand then, what Jesus was really saying in Matthew 5:18. He was authenticating the Old Testament scriptures, the only scriptures they had in the first century when He spoke, as the very words of God, and He was pre-authenticating the New Testament which would ultimately become part of the scripture by choosing the men who would write it.

And they would write under His authority, giving His commands, and His words, like the words of the Old Testament, would never pass away.

That means, by the way, that Jesus has the right, either Himself or through His apostles, to declare a portion of the Old Testament as fulfilled, and therefore no longer binding on us, which is exactly what He ultimately does with the ceremonial laws, right? It wasn't abolished. It wasn't annulled. It was fulfilled, and so Jesus could say, you no longer have to keep those things. He has that authority.

Now, if in fact the scripture has permanent authority, what are the implications of that? Well, there are two primary implications. The first implication is it should be your authority. If God has spoken and what He says has permanent authority, then it should be what you believe, and it should be how you attempt to live. Can you genuinely say that the Bible is the authority on which you base your daily decisions? Really? Does it frame the choices you make in your family and how you interact with your family? Does it frame how you interact on the job? How you do your work? How hard you work? Does it frame what you do in school? Does it frame how you interact with people in your life? Listen, if it's permanent authority, then it has every right to tell me and you exactly, in every detail, how to live our lives.

The second implication is, if it has permanent authority, it is always relevant. There are people who think the Bible is irrelevant. You know, why would you spend all that time studying the Bible? Just share some stories, Tom, about what's happened in your life. Who cares? That doesn't have any permanent authority. That doesn't have any power to change people's hearts and lives. The authority rests in the scripture, and that never changes, from time to time and from place to place. In fact what does Jesus say in Matthew 28 when He gives the great commission to the 500 disciples gathered there on the mountain in Galilee after the resurrection? What does he say to them? I want you to go, where? –into all the nations. Wait a minute Lord. Are you saying that Your words will work in Asia, in Africa? But there's a different context there. No, Jesus says I want you to go into all the nations. And I want you, after you've made disciples and after you baptize them, I want you to teach them what?—all the things I have commanded you. My words are relevant wherever you go. And then He says, and lo I am with you always, what?—even to the end of the age. In other words, there will never be a time when what I've said isn't relevant. In every time and in every place what I taught you is relevant. That is permanent authority. So Jesus believed in its permanent authority.

Jesus also believed in its verbal inspiration. Look again at verse 18. "Not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law" Now, I've used two words here in my outline that you shouldn't be frightened by. *Verbal Inspiration*. Those two words are words theologians use to explain what the scriptures teach about themselves. In fact, what our Lord teaches here in this verse. Look at the word *inspiration*. As Mike Fabarez reminded us well during the Essentials

Conference, it comes from the Latin Vulgate translation of 2 Timothy 3:16. The Latin word that Jerome used was *inspirata*. The Greek word from which we got the word *inspired* in that text is *theopneustas*. It literally means God-breathed. The breath of God. All scripture is breathed out by God in the sense that He spoke it. That's what it means. Scripture is the product of God's breath, just like the words I'm speaking to you right now are the product of my breath. So they are God's words. As B.B. Warfield said, "to hear the scripture is to hear God speak." Have you thought about it that way? To hear the scripture is to hear God speak. They're His words. That's inspiration.

What about the word *verbal*? The word *verbal* simply means that God not only is the source of the ideas or the thoughts of scripture, but He's also the source of the very words themselves. That's *verbal*. The very words are God's words. God breathed out through His Spirit, every single word that appeared in the original autographs, that is, in the original documents that Moses and each of the prophets wrote. That's what the church has traditionally taught for 2,000 years. I'm not alone here, out on my own ideas. There are a number of examples. Let me just give you two. Origen, one of the early church fathers wrote it this way. "Every reader of scripture (every reader, this is how it was viewed in the early church) reverentially understands that he is dealing with divine and non-human words inserted in the sacred books." Now, he wasn't saying there weren't human authors. He believed that and taught that. He was saying that the ultimate source for those words was not the human author but rather, God himself. They were divine and non-human words--the words themselves. I love the image that some of the early church fathers used. Apolathis was one of them. Listen to this. "Just as it is with musical instruments, so that they always have the word like the pic in union with them, and when moved by Him, the prophets announced what God willed. For they did not speak of their own power. Let there be no mistake as to that. Neither did they declare what pleased themselves." Think about that image for a moment. They're saying that the writers of scripture were like a musical instrument. And the word was a pic and the Holy Spirit was the player. And He was strumming out the tune on them He wanted. Was the instrument involved? Of course. But the one who was playing it got the music he wanted in the end—down to the very words.

That's what has been believed. But are we right to believe that? Or is that view, as some would say today, a fabrication of either the early church fathers or the reformers? The answer is, according to this text, no. That is exactly what Jesus Himself believed. In fact, there were times when Jesus based His entire argument on a single word in the Hebrew Old Testament. You remember when we studied Mark 12 when He's arguing for the deity of the Messiah. He says, okay, I want to know. Whose son is the Messiah? Is He the son of David or not? And they're sort of going back and forth with that question, and that was their answer. Yeah, He's the son of David. And Jesus said, well then why does David write "the Lord said to my Lord" He argues on the basis of the pronoun *my* that the Messiah has to be greater than David and not just his

descendant. Not just his physical offspring. He chooses one word from the Hebrew Old Testament and argues for the deity of the Messiah

But Jesus goes even farther than that—farther than the individual words being inspired. Look at verse 18 again. "not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law" Literally, listen to what the Greek text says. "One iota (and that's normally Anglicized as iota, one iota) or one little horn, no not at all, shall pass away" What is he talking about? Well, the iota is the smallest Greek letter. Here Jesus probably intends it to refer to the smallest Hebrew letter, yod. It's the equivalent of our English letter Y. The Hebrew letter, yod, looks a lot like an apostrophe in English. Now, I didn't count on my own, but linguists tell us there are more than 66,000 of those little yods in the Old Testament. 66,000 of them. Now, if there are 66,000, how important can one of those little apostrophe looking letters really be? How bad could it be if you leave out one of 66,000. You know you picture this poor scribe sitting there day after day copying down a scripture and he gets to the end of a page that's taken him a week to copy, (because they were so careful) and he realizes, back at the beginning, oh no. I left out a yod. How bad can it be? Jesus' answer is not one of those 66,000 plus yods will pass away.

But He goes on. He uses the Greek word for stroke. Literally it's a little horn. It's translated here the smallest stroke. It refers to the smallest penstroke that distinguishes one letter from another. In English, picture a capital O and then picture a capital Q. Capital O, capital Q. What distinguishes those two letters from each other when you're reading through a piece of text? That tiny little penstroke at the bottom right hand corner of a Q. That's it. That's the only difference. That's the kind of thing Jesus is referring to here. The same thing is true in Hebrew. In fact, if you look at the Hebrew letter for B, beit, and you compare it to the Hebrew letter for K, kaf, they're almost identical, except for a little protrusion in the lower right hand corner. Or take the Hebrew letter for D, dalet, and compare it to the Hebrew letter for R, reish, and again, very very similar. Just a little corner point different. That's what Jesus is referring to. Jesus says not one of those small distinguishing marks that marks out one letter from another will pass away, that is lose its force or become invalid. Not one. You can only imagine how many of those there are in the old Testament.

So Jesus is making a remarkable claim. He is claiming that the Old Testament scriptures are breathed out by God, not only in their individual words, but even down to the individual letters, and to the smallest strokes that distinguish one letter from another. It's the first century equivalent to our saying, not the dot of an I or the cross of a T. As R. Laird Harris, in his excellent book called *The Inspiration and Canonicity of Scripture* writes. "Jesus declared that the scriptures were letter perfect." That's what He's saying. The scriptures are letter perfect. Do you understand what Jesus is asserting here as absolutely true? He's saying the Old Testament is God's very word breathed out by Him down to the smallest Hebrew letter, and even the tiniest stroke that distinguishes one letter from another. That is a remarkable claim. If you're a follower

of Jesus Christ, understand that's what your Lord believed, and that's what He expects you to believe as well. And for those of us who do believe it, now you see why? We have it on the authority of our Lord Himself. And there is no authority more deserving of our confidence. There is no human authority, (not myself, not some flawed human academic, not the consensus of the academic community) in which I would rather put my eternal trust than the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what He said and believed the Old Testament scripture to be, and ultimately affirmed the New Testament scripture which is eventually called that by His appointed apostles. He is our ultimate authority. So He is the foundation of our faith.

There's a third attribute of scripture He marks in this passage. And that's its plenary inspiration. Don't be scared of that word *plenary*. Again, a theological term. It simply means all. It's all breathed out by God. You remember back up in verse 17, Jesus referred to the Law and the Prophets, speaking of the entire Hebrew Old Testament. Notice what He says at the end of verse 18. Not the smallest letter or stroke, not one, shall pass away from the law until what? all is accomplished. Not only is each individual stroke and letter and word of the Old Testament scripture breathed out by God, but all of it in its entirety is breathed out by God. Not even one small letter or one small stroke will pass from the Law until all of it, in its entirety, is accomplished. In the first part of this statement, Jesus affirmed all of the parts. In the second part of this statement, Jesus affirms the whole, the entirety of the Old Testament to be the word of God. Not just its letters and words, but all of its letters and words. John Wenham, writing in a book compiled by Norman Geisler entitled *Inerrancy* writes this. "Christ held the Old Testament to be historically true, completely authoritative, and divinely inspired. To Him, the God of the Old Testament was the living God, and the teaching of the Old Testament was the teaching of the living God. To Him, what scripture said, God said."

Now why is this important? Because we live in a day when this is being seriously questioned. I want to touch on this a little more next week. But do you understand that Jesus affirmed the Old Testament in its entirety? There's nothing you will read there that Jesus didn't affirm. In fact, just take the gospels. Let me challenge you to do this. Read through the gospels, and look at what Jesus affirmed as historically accurate from the Old Testament narratives. Let me just give you a list, okay? Put on your seat belt. Ready? Genesis 1 and 2 as a historical record of the creation. The creation of man, the historicity of Adam and Eve, the marriage of Adam and Eve. The fall of man in the garden. The murder of Abel. The reality of Noah and the flood. The days of Lot. The divine destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The giving of the law at Sinai. The Ten Commandments. Moses lifting up the bronze serpent in the wilderness. Jacob's giving a field to Joseph. The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. A famine in the days of Elijah. Naaman the Syrian being cleansed of leprosy by Elisha. The queen of Sheba coming to meet Solomon. Jonah being in the belly of a great fish. Jonah's message to Nineveh, and the people of Nineveh repenting. And the stoning of Zechariah. And that's not all of them. All those historical facts recorded in the Old Testament, are confirmed by our Lord in the gospel record.

If you're going to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, then you must believe what He believed about the Old Testament. You must believe that it is breathed out by God, not only down to its letters and strokes of letters, but in its entirety—all of it.

Not only in its affirmation about the way of salvation, but in its affirmation about the way the world was made. There are Christians who, in a sincere to synchronize the Bible with the findings of modern science, will argue that the theological statements of scripture are true but not necessarily the scientific and the historical facts. Folks, that is an illogical position. If one word of the scripture is wrong, then none of it can truly be trusted, because we have no mechanism, no apparatus to go through and say definitively, this is true, and this is not. If one word is false, then none of it can be fully trusted. If God didn't destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone, then how do we know there is only one true God as He has said elsewhere? If Jonah was not swallowed by a great fish, then how can we be sure that God will extend His mercy to repentant Gentiles, which is the message of the book of Jonah? It all goes together. The redemptive promises and the historical facts. That's why Jesus affirmed its plenary inspiration. All of it breathed out by God. And you and I must as well.

Let me ask you, what is your authority? I'm not asking theoretically. I mean really and practically, what is the authority on which you are building your life. Is your confidence in some expert or group of experts, in scientists, in a textbook you got in school, in some professor in college who can't figure out how to straighten out his own life? In some guru or some self-help expert, in the shared views of our culture? Or worst of all, is your confidence and authority in yourself? In your own ability to discern what's true. Are you really willing to trust your own authority, to stake your life and eternity on your own knowledge, and your own wisdom and your own ability to sort out what's true? Do you really want to gamble your life and eternity on that authority that you have? Has it always been absolutely trustworthy? Has it always proven to be true? Listen, stop putting your trust in some unreliable authority, and instead, put your full trust, your full confidence in Jesus Christ, because He is the only person in all of human history who has proven Himself to be worthy. He said in John 14:6. I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life, and no one comes to the Father but by Me. And Jesus put His full trust, as we see in this text, and urged us to place our full trust in the scripture as the breathed out words of God. He authenticated the Old Testament. He pre-authenticated the New Testament by choosing the men who would represent Him to write it.

If you and I refuse to believe about the Bible what Jesus believed about the Bible, then we are saying that He was either ignorant or dishonest. He either didn't know better, or He knew better and lied about it. And we are establishing ourselves, then, as the authority. Jesus makes it clear that the scripture is the ultimate word from outside this planet. You understand that? The scripture is the only word we have from outside this planet. Jesus affirmed that reality. That

means what the Bible teaches is reality. That means that every one of us is a sinner. That God is a righteous creator who made us, who has every right to tell us what to do, who gave us every resource, every opportunity, and expects us to obey. And that we have chosen to go our own way, to sin against God, to make our own choices, to live our own lives, to do what we want, to pursue our sin, our lust, our own satisfaction. And that sin, as the Bible calls it, has earned us a guilty verdict before God and a punishment of eternal wrath from God in a place called hell. That's what the scriptures teach.

But they also teach that God so loved the world that He sent His only Son. He sent His Son to live a perfect life, a life that you and I could never have lived in perfect conformity to fulfill the scripture. And then He died, not for His own sins, but for the sins of all of those who would ever believe in Him. He paid the penalty for every sin of every person who would ever believe in Him. And He died and was buried. He rose again on the third day. He's now ascended into heaven, and one day, the Bible says, He's coming again. And the only way for you to be right with that God is for you to stop your rebellion against Him, to acknowledge that to Him, to humble yourself before Him, and take the gift He's offered in His Son by receiving His Son as Lord and Savior. That's your only hope. That's the truth according to our Lord Himself.

Most of us here this morning already belong to Jesus. If you are part of His followers, then He demands that you believe about the scripture what He believed about the scripture, it's permanent authority, its verbal inspiration, and its plenary inspiration. So, folks, the next time somebody asks you, and this happens all the time doesn't it? The next time somebody says to you; so, you know you seem like an intelligent person. Why do you really believe the Bible to be God's word? Say this to them. I believe the Bible because Jesus of Nazareth believed the Bible and taught me I could trust it. And I believe Him. So tell me, what's your authority for not believing it? Jesus believed and we must believe that as B. B. Warfield put it, "when the Bible speaks, God speaks".

Lord willing, next time we take up this text I want to finish the attributes of scripture that our Lord lays out here, and then I want to leave this text and I want to look in the life of Jesus at how that played out practically. How His high view of scripture played out and how He used the scripture, and what we should do with the scripture as well.

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for Your word. Thank You that You have given us Your very words. Not only the words, but down to the smallest letter and the smallest stroke of a letter. They're breathed out by You. Thank You that we can have that confidence, because our Lord had that confidence. Father, help us to live as Christians in light of that reality. Help us to love it and to read it and to study it and to obey it and to share it with others, to pass it on to our children. As a church to guard and protect it against error.

Father I pray for those here this morning who are still living in rebellion against the truth. You've written it on their hearts—on their consciences. They know they've sinned against You. They know what Your word says is true. They sense that they have no hope someday when they die, as we all will, and they stand before You. Father, may this be the day when they truly acknowledge You as their righteous creator and acknowledge their sin and acknowledge Jesus as their only hope, and receive Him as Lord and Savior. We pray it for His glory and in His name. Amen.