

# *Powerful Faith*

*R. A. Torrey*



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*Publisher's note:*

The author's selection of Bible versions has been retained whenever possible, including the Revised Version when it was originally cited. The text of this book, however, has been updated for the modern reader. Words, expressions, and sentence structure have been revised for clarity and readability.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible. Scripture quotations marked (RV) are taken from the Revised Version of the Holy Bible.

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## Powerful Faith

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## chapter 1

# The Testimony of Jesus Christ

**T**he most important question in religious thought is, “Is the Bible the Word of God?” If the Bible is the Word of God, if it is an absolutely trustworthy revelation of God and man and eternal realities, then we have a starting point from which we can proceed and conquer the whole domain of religious truth. But, if the Bible is not the Word of God, if it is the mere product of man’s thinking, speculating, and guessing, if it is not altogether trustworthy in regard to religious and eternal truth, then we are all at sea, not knowing where we are drifting, but we may be sure that we are not drifting toward any safe port.

I did not always believe the Bible to be the Word of God. At one time I sincerely doubted that it was. I doubted that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. I doubted that there was a personal God. I was not an infidel—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 act accordingly. If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, I determined to find that out and act accordingly. If the Bible was the Word of God, I determined to find that out and act accordingly.

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I found out. I found out beyond any doubt that there is a God, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that the Bible is the Word of God. Today, I do not consider these things to be a matter of mere probability, nor even of mere belief, but of absolute certainty.

I am going to give you some of the reasons why I believe the Bible to be the Word of God. I will not give you all the reasons—it would take months to do that. I will not even give you the reasons that are most conclusive to me personally, for these are of such a personal and experimental nature that they cannot be conveyed to another. But I will give you reasons that will prove conclusive to any sincere seeker after the truth, to anyone who desires to know the truth and is willing to obey it. They 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 choice of error, and he must be given over to strong delusion to believe a lie. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:11.) But, if one is searching for the truth, no matter how completely he is 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. We live in 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 said, but as for what Moses said, or is said to have said, and what Isaiah said, or is said to have said, and what Jeremiah said, and Paul said, and John said, and what the rest of the Bible writers said, they do not know about that.

This position may at first glance seem rational, but, in fact, it is utterly irrational. If we accept the teaching of Jesus Christ, we must accept the whole Bible, for Jesus Christ has put the stamp of His authority on the entire

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Book. And if we accept His authority, we must accept everything on which He puts the stamp of His authority.

### **Christ's Endorsement of the Old Testament**

As for Christ's endorsement of the Old Testament, look first of all at Mark 7:10–13. He is speaking here to the Pharisees and scribes:

*For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.*

In these verses, Jesus begins by quoting from the Ten Commandments, as well as from another portion of the Law of Moses. (See Exodus 20:12; 21:17.) Then He compares the teaching of the Law of Moses to the traditions of the Pharisees and scribes. Then He says, “You make *‘the word of God of none effect through your tradition’* (v. 13, italics added).” Here He distinctly calls the Law of Moses the “word of God.”

It is oftentimes said that the Bible nowhere claims to be the Word of God. 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 little difficulty with the rest of the Old Testament, for it is here that the hottest battle is being fought today.

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Look at Matthew 5:18. Here Jesus says, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Now every Hebrew scholar knows that a “jot” is the Hebrew character *yodh*, the smallest character in the Hebrew alphabet, less than half the size of any other character. And, he knows that a “tittle” is a little horn that the Hebrews put on their consonants. Here Jesus asserts that the Law of Moses, as originally given, is absolutely infallible down to its smallest letter and part of a 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.

Look now at John 10:34–35:

*Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?...He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken.*

Jesus has just quoted from Psalms 82:6, and then He adds, “*The scripture cannot be broken.*” Thus, He puts the stamp of His authority on the absolute inerrancy of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Read Luke 24:27, and note the words *in all the scriptures*: “*Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*” And in verse forty-four He says, “*All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms.*”

Now every scholar knows that the Jews divided their Bible (our present Old Testament) into three parts: the law (the first five books of the Old Testament), the prophets (most of the books that we call prophetic and some of those that we call historical), and the psalms or sacred writings



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(the remaining books of the Old Testament). Jesus Christ takes each one of these three recognized divisions of the Old Testament and puts the stamp of His authority on each of them. If, then, we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we are logically driven to accept the entire Old Testament.

In Luke 16:31 Jesus says, *“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead,”* thus in the most emphatic way endorsing the truth of the Old Testament Scriptures.

In John 5:47 He says, *“If ye believe not his [Moses’] writings, how shall ye believe my words?”* Thus, He puts the stamp of His authority on the teaching of Moses. He is saying that the teaching of Moses is as truly from God as His own.

### ***Christ’s Endorsement of the New Testament***

We must then, if we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, accept the entire Old Testament. But what about the New Testament? Did Jesus put the stamp of His authority on it also? He did. But how could He when not one book of the New Testament had been written when He left this earth? By way of anticipation. Look at John 14:26, and see what Jesus says:

*The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

Thus, He puts the stamp of His authority, not only on the apostolic teaching as given by the Holy Spirit, but on the apostolic recollection of what He Himself had taught.

The question is often asked, “How do we know that the gospel records are an accurate reproduction of the teachings of Jesus Christ?” It is asked, “Did the apostles take

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notes at the time of what Jesus said?" There is reason to believe that they did, that Matthew and Peter (from whom Mark derived his material) and James (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 report of what they took down at the time.

However, whether this is true or not does not matter for our present purposes, for we have Christ's own statement that the apostolic records are not the apostles' recollection of what Jesus said, but the Holy Spirit's recollection of what Jesus said. While the apostles might forget and report inaccurately, the Holy Spirit could not forget.

Furthermore, look at John 16, and see what Jesus says:

*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.*

(John 16:12-13)

Here Jesus puts the stamp of His authority on the teaching of the apostles. He says that their teaching is given by the Holy Spirit, contains all the truth, and contains truth in addition to His own teaching. He tells the apostles that He has many things to tell them that they are not yet ready to receive, 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 writings) as being given through the Holy Spirit, as containing all the truth, and as containing more truth than Jesus taught while on earth.

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There are many in our day crying, "Back to Christ," by which they usually mean, "We do not care what Paul taught, what John taught, what James taught, or what Jude taught. We do not know about them. Let us go 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, for 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 Christ and no Bible. There are some people these days who say that they believe in Christ, but not in the Christ of the New Testament. But, there is no Christ except 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 fancy, and whoever worships him is an idolater.

### ***Five Divine Testimonies to Jesus' Authority***

We must accept the authority of Jesus Christ. He is commended to us by five unmistakable divine testimonies.

### ***The Divine Life That Jesus Lived***

First is the testimony of the divine life that He lived, for He lived as no other man ever lived. Let any man take the four gospels and read them carefully and candidly; he will soon be convinced of two things. First, he will be convinced that he is reading the story of a life actually lived.

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No man could have imagined the character there set forth. Much less could four men have imagined a character, each one making his own account of that character consistent, not only with itself, but with the other three. To suppose that the four writers of the Gospels imagined Jesus' life would be to suppose a greater miracle than any recorded in the Gospels.

The candid reader will be convinced, secondly, that the life here set forth is separate from all other human lives, that it stands by itself, that it is clearly a divine life lived under human conditions. Napoleon Bonaparte was a good judge of men. He once said, regarding the life of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels, which he had been reading, "I know men [and if he did not know men, who ever did?], and Jesus Christ was not a man." What he meant was, of course, that Jesus Christ was not a mere man.

### **The Divine Words That He Spoke**

Jesus Christ is commended to us by a second unmistakable divine testimony. It is the divine words that He spoke. If anyone will study the teachings of Jesus Christ with openness and faithfulness, he will soon see that they have a character that distinguishes them from all other teachings ever uttered on earth.

### **The Divine Works That He Did**

Third, Jesus Christ was commended to us by the divine works that He did, not only healing the sick, which many others have done, but cleansing the leper, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead (see Matthew 11:4–5), stilling the tempest by a word (see Mark 4:37–39), turning water into wine (see John 2:1–10), and feeding five thousand with five small loaves and two small fishes (see Matthew 14:16–21). These miracles of power are clear

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credentials of a God-sent teacher. We cannot study them candidly and not come to the same conclusion as Nicodemus did: "*We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him*" (John 3:2).

Of course, strenuous efforts have been made to eliminate the supernatural element 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. The most able effort of this kind was that of David Strauss in his *Leben Jesu*. David Strauss was a man of remarkable ability and gifts, a man of real and profound scholarship, a man of notable genius, a man of singular power in critical analysis, a man of indomitable perseverance and untiring industry. He applied all the rare gifts of his richly endowed mind to a study of the story of Jesus' life, with the determination to discredit its miraculous element. He spent his best years and strength in this effort.

If anyone could have succeeded in such an effort, David Strauss was the man, but he failed utterly. For a time it seemed to many that he had succeeded in his purpose, but when his study of Jesus was itself submitted to rigid, critical analysis, it fell to pieces, and today is utterly discredited. In fact, others who wish to eliminate the miraculous element from the story of Jesus feel that they must make the attempt anew, since the attempt of David Strauss has come to nothing.

Where David Strauss failed, Ernest Renan tried again. He had not, by any means, the ability and mind of Strauss, but he was a man of brilliant genius, of subtle imagination, of rare literary skill, and of singular finesse. His *Life of Jesus* was read with interest and admiration by many. The work was done with fascinating skill. Some fancied that Ernest Renan had succeeded in his attempt,

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but his *Life of Jesus* was discredited in an even shorter time than David Strauss's work.

All other attempts have met with a similar fate. It is an attempt at the impossible. Let any objective man take the life of Jesus and read it for himself with attention and care, and he will soon discover that the life there pictured could not have been imagined. He will see that Jesus' teachings are not fictitious teachings put into the mouth of a fictitious person, but they are the real utterances of a real person. He will also discover that the character and the teaching 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 teaching disappear. The character and the teachings cannot be separated from the miraculous element without a violence that no reasonable man will permit.

Today, this much at least is proven, that Jesus lived and did precisely as it is recorded in the four gospels. Personally, I believe that more than this is proven, but this is enough for our present purpose. If Jesus lived and did precisely as the Gospels record—cleansing the lepers, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, stilling the tempest with His word, feeding the five thousand with the five small loaves and the two small fishes—then He bears unmistakable credentials as a teacher sent and endorsed by God.

### His Divine Influence on History

Fourth, Jesus Christ is also commended to us by His divine influence on all subsequent history. Jesus Christ was definitely one of three things: He was either the son of God in a unique sense (a divine person incarnate in human form), or else He was the most daring impostor that ever lived, or else He was one of the most hopeless lunatics. There can be no honest doubt about Jesus' claims: He

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claimed that He was the Son of God in a unique sense, that all men should honor Him even as they honor the Father, that He and the Father were one, and that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father. (See John 5:17–18, 23; 10:30; and 14:9.)

So, He was either the divine Person that He claimed to be, or the most daring impostor, or a most hopeless lunatic. Was His influence on subsequent history the influence of a lunatic? No one but a lunatic would say so. Was His influence on subsequent history the influence of an impostor? No one except a person whose own heart is thoroughly corrupted by deceit and fraud would ever think of saying so. He was not an impostor or a lunatic. We have only one alternative left: He was what He claimed to be—the Son of God.

### **His Resurrection from the Dead**

Fifth, Jesus Christ is commended to us by His resurrection from the dead. Later on I will present the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We will see that the historical 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.

The resurrection of Christ is God's seal to Christ's claim. Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God. He was put to death for making that claim. Before being put to death, He said that God would set His seal to the claim by raising Him from the dead. (See Mark 8:31.) They killed Him; they laid Him in the sepulcher; they rolled a stone to the door of the sepulcher; they sealed that door with the Roman seal (see Matthew 27:65–66), which to break was death. When the appointed hour of which Christ had spoken came, the breath of God swept through His dead body, and Jesus rose triumphant over death. In this, God

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spoke more clearly than if He would speak from the open heavens today and say, "*This is my beloved Son: hear him*" (Mark 9:7).

We must then, if we are honest, accept the authority of Jesus Christ. But, as already seen, 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.

### ***Jesus versus the School of Criticism***

A school of criticism has arisen that presumes to set up its authority in place of the authority of Jesus Christ. They say, for example, "Jesus said that Psalm 110 was by David and was Messianic (see Matthew 22:42–45), but we say that Psalm 110 is neither by David nor is Messianic." They ask us to give up the authority and infallibility of Jesus Christ and the Bible, and to accept their authority and their infallibility instead. Very well, but before doing it, we demand their credentials. We do not yield to anyone's claim of authority and infallibility until he presents his credentials.

Jesus Christ presents His credentials. First of all, He presents the credential of the divine life that He lived. What do they have to compare with that? We hear much about the beautiful lives of some men in this school of 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 truth in the argument, "If a man's life is in the right, his doctrine cannot be in the wrong"—and there is truth in the argument—it testifies immeasurably more for the authority of Jesus Christ than it does for the authority of any critic or school of critics.



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Second, Jesus presents the credential of the divine words that He spoke. What do they have to compare with that? The words of Jesus Christ have stood the test of century after century, and they shine out with luster and glory today more than ever. What school of criticism has ever stood the test of even twenty years? If one has to choose between the teaching of Christ and that of any school of criticism, it will not take any sane man long to choose.

Third, Jesus Christ presents His third credential, the divine works that He did. They are the unmistakable seal of God on His claims. What does this school of criticism have to compare with 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 on human history. We all know what the influence of Jesus Christ has been, how favorable 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. Alas! We also know the influence of this school of criticism. We know that it is weakening the power of ministers and Christian workers everywhere. We know that it is emptying churches. We know that it is depleting missionary treasuries. We know that it is paralyzing missionary effort in every field where it has gone. I know this by personal observation and not by hearsay. This may not be their intention. With some of them it is not their intention, but nonetheless it is a fact. The influence of Jesus has been thoroughly beneficial. The influence of this school of criticism has been utterly bad.

Jesus presents His fifth credential, His resurrection from the dead. What does this school of criticism have to compare with that? Nothing whatsoever. Jesus Christ

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establishes His claim. The opposing school of criticism stands speechless.

Therefore, we refuse to bow to the assumed and unsubstantiated authority and infallibility of any school of criticism, of any priest, of any pope, or of any theological professor, but most gladly do we bow to the authority and infallibility of Jesus Christ, so completely proven. Upon His authority we accept the entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament as the Word of God.