

# TALKS TO MEN

ABOUT THE BIBLE AND THE CHRIST OF THE BIBLE

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## FIRST TALK

### ONE REASON WHY I BELIEVE THE BIBLE TO BE THE WORD OF GOD

THE most important question in religious thought is, "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 will, of man's duty and destiny, of spiritual and eternal realities, then we have a starting-point from which we can proceed to the conquest of 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, not altogether trustworthy in regard to religious and eternal truth, then we are all at sea, not knowing whither 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. 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 personal God. I was not an infidel—I was a sceptic. I did not deny—I questioned. I was not an atheist—I was an agnostic. I did not know, but I determined to find that out and act accordingly. If there was not 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 Jesus Christ was not 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; and if the Bible was not the Word of God, I determined to find that out and act accordingly. I found out. I found out beyond peradventure that there is a God, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that the Bible is the Word of God. Today it is with me not 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. Not all the reasons, it would take months to do that, not even the reasons which are most conclusive to me personally, for these are of such a personal and experimental character that they cannot be conveyed to another. But I will give you reasons that will prove conclusive to any candid seeker after the truth, to any one 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 given over to strong delusion to believe a lie. 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.

## FIRST REASON

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; that they believe what Jesus Christ says, 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 Paul said, and John said, and the rest of the Bible writers, they do not know about that. This position may at the 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 the stamp of His authority upon the entire Book, and if we accept His authority, we must accept all that upon which He sets the stamp of His authority.

As to Christ's endorsement of the Old Testament, turn first of all to Mark vii. 13. Jesus has just quoted from 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 Scribes, and in this verse He says, You do make "*the Word of God* of none effect through your tradition." 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.

Turn again to Matthew v. 18. Here Jesus says, "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law until 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 in the Hebrew alphabet, and that a "tittle" is a little horn that the Hebrews put on their consonants; and 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.

Turn next to John x. 35. Jesus has just quoted in proof of a point which He

is making from one of the Psalms, and adds, "The Scripture cannot be broken," thus setting the stamp of His authority upon the absolute irrefragability of the Old Testament Scriptures. Turn again to Luke xxiv. 27, and you will read that Jesus, "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself"; and in the 44th verse 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 Scriptures) into three parts: the law (the first five books of the Old Testament); the prophets (most of 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 recognised divisions of these Old Testament Scriptures and sets the stamp of His authority upon each of them. If, then, we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we are driven logically to accept the entire Old Testament Scriptures.

In Luke xvi. 31 Jesus says, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one be raised from the dead," thus in the most emphatic way endorsing the truth of the Old Testament Scriptures.

In John v. 47 He says, "If ye believe not his (Moses') writings, how shall ye believe My words?" thus setting the stamp of His authority upon the teaching of Moses as being as truly from God as was His own. We must then, if we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, accept the entire Old Testament.

But how about the New Testament? Did Jesus set the stamp of His authority upon it also? He did. But how could He when not a book of the New Testament was written when He departed from this earth? By way of anticipation. Turn to John xiv. 26 and you will hear Jesus saying, "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 setting the stamp of His authority, not only upon the Apostolic teaching as given by the Holy Ghost, but upon the Apostolic recollection of what He Himself had taught. The question is often asked, "How do we know that in the Gospel records we have an accurate reproduction of the teaching 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, 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. But whether this be true or not does not matter for our present purposes, for we have Christ's own authority for it that in the Apostolic records we have not the Apostles' recollection of what Jesus said, but

the Holy Ghost's recollection of what Jesus said, and while the Apostles might forget and report inaccurately, the Holy Ghost could not forget.

Turn furthermore to John xvi. 12, 13, and you will hear Jesus saying, "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." Here Jesus sets the stamp of His authority upon the teaching of the Apostles as being given by the Holy Ghost, 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 writings, 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 crying, "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 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, 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 fancy, and whoever worships him is an idolator. But we must accept the authority of Jesus Christ. He is accredited to us by five unmistakable divine testimonies.

First, by the testimony of the divine life that He lived, for He lived as never man lived. Let any man take the four Gospels for himself and read them carefully and candidly, he will soon be convinced of two things: First, that he is reading the story of a life actually lived, that no man could have imagined the character there set forth unless the life had been actually lived, much less could four men have imagined a character, each one of the four making his own account of that character, not only consistent with itself, 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. He will 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 conditions. 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 if he did not know men, whoever did?), and Jesus Christ was not a man." What he meant was, of course, that Jesus Christ was not a mere man.

Second, Jesus Christ is accredited to us by the divine words that He spoke. If any one will study the teaching of Jesus Christ with candour and faithfulness, he will soon see that it has a character that distinguishes it from all other teaching ever uttered on earth.

Third, Jesus Christ was accredited to us by the divine works that He wrought, not only healing the sick, which many others have done, but cleansing the leper, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, stilling the tempest by a word, turning water into wine, and feeding 5,000 with five small loaves and two small fishes, which was a creative act. These miracles of power are clear credentials of a God-sent Teacher. We cannot study them candidly and not come to the same conclusion as Nicodemus, "We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do these signs that Thou doest, except God be with him." Of course, we bear in mind the fact that 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 that was ever made 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 of critical analysis, a man of indomitable perseverance and untiring industry. He brought to bear all the rare gifts of His richly endowed mind upon the story of the life of Jesus with the determination to discredit the miraculous element therein contained. He spent his best years and strength in this effort. If any one 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 life of Jesus was itself submitted to rigid, critical analysis it fell all to pieces, and today is utterly discredited, and those who wish to eliminate the miraculous element in 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 genius of Strauss, but he was a man of brilliant genius, of subtle imagination, of rare literary skill, of singular adroitness and finesse. His "Life of Christ" 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, but his “Life of Jesus” naturally enough was discredited even in a shorter time than that of David Strauss. All other attempts have met with a similar fate. It is an attempt at the impossible. Let any candid 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, but must have been really lived; that 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 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, that the character and teachings cannot be separated from the miraculous element without a violence of treatment that no reasonable man will permit. Today this much at least is proven, that Jesus lived and wrought 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 wrought substantially as the Gospels record, cleansing the lepers, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, stilling the tempest with His word, feeding the 5,000 with the five small loaves and the two small fishes, then He bears unmistakable credentials as a Teacher sent and endorsed by God.

Fourth, Jesus Christ is also accredited to us in the fourth place by His divine influence upon all subsequent history. Jesus Christ was beyond peradventure 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 one of the most hopeless lunatics. That He claimed to be the Son of God in a unique sense, and that all men should honour Him even as they honoured the Father (John v. 23), and that He and the Father were one (John x. 30), and he that had seen Him had seen the Father (John xiv. 9), of this there can be no honest doubt. He was then either the divine Person that He claimed to be, or the most daring impostor, 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 impostor? No one but one whose own heart was thoroughly cankered with deceit and fraud would think of saying so. Not an impostor, not a lunatic, we have only one alternative left—He was what He claimed to be, the Son of God.

Fifth, Jesus Christ is accredited to us by His resurrection from the dead. Later on I shall present to you the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We will see the 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 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. They killed Him; they laid Him in the sepulchre; they rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre; they sealed that door with the Roman seal, which to break was death; and when the appointed hour of which Christ had spoken came, the breath of God swept through the sleeping clay, and Jesus rose triumphant over death, and God spoke more clearly than if He should 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, 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.*

A school of 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; but 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 place. Very well, but before doing it we demand their credentials. We do not yield to the claim of authority and infallibility of any one 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 have they to place in comparison with that? We hear much about the beauty of the life of some of 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 force in the argument, "If a man's life is in the right, his doctrine cannot be in the wrong"—and there is force in the argument, it 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 credential of the divine words that He spoke. What have they to put up against that? The words of Jesus Christ have stood the test of eighteen centuries, and shine out with greater lustre and glory today than ever. What school of criticism has ever stood the test of eighteen years? 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 credential, the divine works that He wrought, the unmistakable seal of God upon His claims. What has this 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 has been, how benign and how divine. Everything that is best in modern civilisation; 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 paralysing missionary effort on 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 none the less 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 this school of criticism to set up over against that? Nothing whatever. Jesus Christ establishes His claim. 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 gladly do we bow to the authority and infallibility of Jesus Christ, so completely proven, and upon His authority accept the entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament as the Word of God.