

**Matthew**  
**Every Stroke Inspired: Embracing Jesus' High View of Scripture (Part 3)**  
**Matthew 5:17-20**  
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I think you understand this, but the Bible that you hold in your hand is really a kind of lightning rod that attracts the attacks of the enemies of the Christian faith. It's because that's where our faith is founded; that's the reason for our hope; that's how we know everything we know about our faith. And so, it becomes the object of the attack of God's enemies and the enemies of the Christian faith. Attacks like that can be multiplied. I could give you example after example, but let me just give you a couple. There's Bart Ehrman, a former evangelical and a New Testament scholar, who has abandoned his faith. This is what he's written about the Bible:

The Bible is not a divinely inspired set of writings. It is a very human book with all the marks of having been written by human beings, full of contradictions, errors, and differing perspectives. The Bible began to appear to me as a very flawed, very human book, not the inerrant revelation I had once believed.

That's the perspective of many who have abandoned their faith, in some cases what the Bible would call apostates, those who have walked away, never to return again.

There is an entire group of people in our world today who instead of saying that they have abandoned their childhood faith, they like to say they've "Deconstructed their faith." What they really mean is they never truly believed, and now, that's just become obvious, and now, they are expressing their unbelief. For example, there's Josh Harris, who pastored a large Sovereign Grace church and who wrote the book, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. He has changed his view of the Bible. He says now, "I'm now more aware of how human the Bible is, how much it reflects ancient cultures, values, and assumptions that are very different from ours." I could give you quote after quote, and these people love to try to persuade people like you to lose your confidence in the Word of God.

But what we're learning in "The Sermon on the Mount," is that Jesus held a view of Scripture that was diametrically opposed to such voices. In fact, Jesus' view of Scripture could not have been higher, and we believe the Bible because of Him. We believe the Old Testament because He often

affirmed it to be the very words of the living God, and we believe the New Testament because He pre-authenticated it by choosing the men under whose authority it would be written. So, our ultimate authority then is the Word of God, both written and incarnate. That's the point Jesus makes as He opens the body of His message in what we call "The Sermon on the Mount."

We're done with "The Introduction." He's identified "The Citizens of the Kingdom" in "The Beatitudes," and "Our Influence" in verses 13 to 16. And now, we're looking at the paragraph that runs from chapter 5, verse 17, down through verse 20. Let's read it together, these are the words of our Lord.

"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."

The point of this paragraph is that a true subject of Jesus' spiritual kingdom will always have a right relationship to the Scripture. You can always identify a true Christian by how he responds to Scripture. In fact, in this paragraph, Jesus identifies three responses to the Scripture that should characterize every genuine believer. First of all, we saw that Jesus calls us to "Affirm His Relationship to the Scripture," that's the message of verse 17. With the expression, "...the Law and the Prophets," there in verse 17. Jesus confirms that our Old Testament, the same content as the Jewish canon of the first century, that that is, in fact, God's Word. And in verse 17, He makes two assertions about how you and I are to think about His relationship to the Old Testament. First of all, "He Did Not Come to *Abolish* the Old Testament." That's the first half of verse 17.

The second half of verse 17, He says "He Came Instead to *Fulfill* the Old Testament." What does it mean to 'fulfill?' Well, we looked at this in detail. It means that "He explained its meaning in His teaching." Secondly, "He obeyed its commands in His life;" and thirdly, "He embodied its message in His Person," that is, "Its prophecies" about the Messiah as well as "The ceremonies

and the sacrificial system.” He embodied all of those things; He was the ultimate fulfillment of those things. That's how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament.

Now, last week, we began to consider a second response that we should have toward the Scripture. Not only should we “Affirm Jesus' Relationship to the Scripture,” as He's taught us in verse 17; but in verse 18, “We Must Adopt Jesus' View of Scripture,” we must adopt Jesus' view, and we see that in verse 18. Look at it with me. “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.” There is so much in that verse. We're unpacking it together. Jesus here affirms His confidence in several unchanging attributes of the Scripture. What are those attributes? Well, we've looked at a couple already. First of all, He affirmed “Its Permanent Authority.” Notice in verse 18, He says, “Until heaven and earth pass away.” In other words, it is easier for the universe to go out of existence than for the smallest pen stroke of a single letter of God's Word to fail. We looked at that in detail last time.

Secondly, He also affirms “Its Verbal Inspiration.” He says, “Not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law.” Paul tells us that all Scripture is God-breathed. It's the product of the breath of God—that's inspiration. Verbal, the word I've used here in my outline point, means that God is the source of its words even. But Jesus, in our text, goes even further, and He says the Old Testament is breathed out by God down to the smallest Hebrew letter, the ‘*yodh*,’ which looks like our apostrophe in English. There's some 66,000 of them in the Hebrew Old Testament, and He says not one of them will pass away. And then He says, “not even a pen stroke,” not even the stroke that distinguishes one letter from another, like the little squiggle on our ‘Q’ that distinguishes a capital ‘Q’ from an ‘O.’

He affirms, thirdly, “Its Plenary Inspiration.” Notice He says, “Not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law until (What?) all.” The word ‘plenary,’ in my outline point, just means ‘all.’ Not only is each word, each letter, each stroke of the Old Testament breathed out by God, but all of it in its entirety is as well. That's what Jesus believed.

Now that's where we left off last week, and this morning, I want us to go on with Jesus to affirm two more attributes of Scripture. He not only believed in “Its Permanent Authority,” “Its Verbal Inspiration,” “Its Plenary Inspiration,” but also, number four, “Its Complete Inerrancy,” its

complete inerrancy. Look at verse 18 again, “For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law,” and then notice this, “until all is accomplished.” Now I'm going to come back to that, we're going to unpack that, but before we do, let me just give you some background.

The English word ‘inerrancy,’ that I've used in my outline point, simply means that the text of Scripture is ‘without error.’ Here are a couple of theological definitions of inerrancy. By the way, let me prepare you that this is going to be a lot more like a classroom. I think the guys told me I, like, broke a record this morning with the number of slides you're going to see. That's because I want you to have these and have this data in the future when it's posted. So, just know you're not going to be able to write down everything that I throw up on the screen, but I want you to see it. Here are a couple of theological definitions of inerrancy.

First of all, from Paul Feinberg, “When all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible, in its original autographs and correctly interpreted, is entirely true and never false in all it affirms.” Notice, “in all it affirms.” Here's the definition from *Biblical Doctrines*, the textbook that was put out by John MacArthur and the Master's Seminary faculty: “Inerrancy means literally, ‘without error.’ When applied to Scripture, it means that the Bible is without error in the original copies. It is therefore free, when properly interpreted, from affirming anything that is untrue or contrary to fact.” Scripture is without error in its doctrine, in its ethics, and even when it speaks of the social, physical, or life sciences.

Now there are two lines of argument for inerrancy. Let me give you both of them. First of all, let's consider “The Historical Argument.” I want you to know that this isn't something that a group of Christians came up with in the 20th or 21st century. This is what the church has always believed. Let me give you a quote from Greg Allison in his book, *Historical Theology*. In other words, he's building a case for what have Christians believed through the history of the church. This is what he writes. You read along with me.

The church has historically acknowledged that Scripture, in its original manuscripts and properly interpreted, is completely true and without any error in everything that it affirms, whether it has to do with doctrine, moral conduct, or matters of history, cosmology, geography, and the like. Over time, the church has expressed this conviction by applying

a number of terms to the Bible, such as truthful, inerrant, and infallible. No matter what term you use (Listen to this.), the church from its outset was united in its belief that the Word of God is true and contains no error. The first significant challenge to this belief did not arise until the 17th century and the time of the Enlightenment.”

Allison quotes several of the church fathers in his support. By the way, when I refer to the ‘Church Fathers’ today, I’m talking about those men who were pastors and leaders in the church over the first several hundred years that the church existed. Here’s Clement of Rome. He says, “You have searched the Scriptures, which are true. You know that nothing unrighteous or counterfeit is written in them.” Irenaeus, “The Scriptures are indeed perfect.” Now the early Church Fathers understood the inerrancy of Scripture in two ways. First of all, they understood that “What Scripture affirms always corresponds to reality.” It’s the way things are. Tertullian, for example, says, “The statements of Holy Scripture will never be discordant with truth.” Augustine, “I have learned to ascribe to those books which are of canonical rank and only to them, such reverence and honor, that I firmly believe that no single error due to the author is found in any one of them.” By the way, Allison proves, from the writings of Augustine, that he believed that not only about the doctrine of salvation, but about matters of cosmology and human origins.

The early Church Fathers, when they thought of inerrancy, also believed that it meant not only that “What Scripture affirms always corresponds to reality,” but that “Scripture never contradicts Scripture.” Irenaeus, “All Scripture, which has been given to us by God, shall be found by us perfectly consistent.” Justin Martyr, who was discipled by the Apostle John himself, writes, “I am entirely convinced that no Scripture contradicts another.” Athanasius, “It is the opinion of some that the Scriptures do not agree, but there is no disagreement at all. Far from it! Neither can the Father, who is truth, lie; for it is impossible that God should lie.” Now, I could give you quote after quote through the entire flow of church history, but in the interest of time, let me just skip to the Reformation.

This is what they believed then as well. Well, Martin Luther, “Everyone, indeed, knows that at times they (that is the early church fathers) have erred as men will; therefore, I am ready to trust them only when they prove their opinions from Scripture, which has never erred,” never erred. Now, the Westminster Confession, as well as the Baptist Confession, calls “The Scripture ‘the

only infallible rule of faith and practice,” and speaks of its entire perfection and its consent in all its parts. This is what the church has believed. Until the 17th century and the skeptics of the Enlightenment, no one in church history seriously questioned the inerrancy of Scripture.

So why is that? How did all of the great minds of the church come to conclude this and to teach this? It's because of the second argument, and that is “There are clear Biblical Arguments” to this end. Let me summarize them for you under two heads. When we look at the biblical arguments, let me give you first of all, “The Claims of Scripture Itself,” the Scripture claims this for itself. In fact, a true prophet always speaks only what is true. Turn back to Deuteronomy; Deuteronomy 18. Let me set the context. When God first revealed Himself in writing, He did so through Moses. And the two-million Jews that Moses led out of Egypt, they never doubted that Moses was God's spokesman. You read Exodus 19, and you discover why, because Moses goes up on the mountain, God shows up, the mountain's covered with a thick cloud, there's lightning, there's thunder, there's an earthquake, there's a trumpet that grows louder and louder and louder until it frightens the people to death, and then it stops. And out of the stillness of that moment, God's own voice is heard from the top of Mount Sinai pronouncing the Ten Commandments. They knew this was God, and they knew Moses was God's spokesman.

But how would they know that the men to come after Moses were God's spokesmen? There was no repetition of Mount Sinai. How were they going to know? Well, Moses lays down the rules for how to know, and there are several of them in Deuteronomy. One of them is in Deuteronomy 13:1-5, where he says a true prophet will always speak what is in agreement with previous revelation. And if he doesn't, it doesn't matter if he can work miracles, he's not a true prophet. God's not going to disagree with what He's already said.

But there's another here in Deuteronomy 18. Look at Deuteronomy 18, verse 20, “But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.” Wow! So how do you know who that is? Verse 21, “You may say in your heart, ‘How will we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’” Now watch verse 22, this is the standard, “When a prophet (when someone who claims to speak) in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you

shall not be afraid of him.” Back to verse 20, “You'll kill him, give him the death penalty.” In other words, the standard for someone who speaks for God is that everything he says is right and true and happens. And if that isn't true, then he's not a real prophet. This is what the Scripture says about true prophets. And all those who followed Moses claimed that for themselves, and the people attributed this to them.

This is what Scripture claims. 2 Samuel 7:28, “Now, O LORD God, You are God (Listen to this.), and Your words are truth.” Psalm 12, verse 6, a beautiful image, “The words of the LORD (Yahweh) are pure words.” How pure is God's Word (that Book you hold in your hand)? “As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.” You know what the psalmist is saying? If you could take silver and you could refine it enough, perfectly, so that there's absolutely no impurity, no dross left in it at all, it is truly pure silver, that's what the Word of God is like. Psalm 119, verse 160, “The sum of Your word (all of your word is truth), and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.” I mentioned that verse last time, it's all true and every statement is true.

2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 15, Paul is admonishing Timothy to be careful in his teaching and he says, you want to be “accurately handling the Scripture,” and you know what he calls the Scripture? He says, you need “to be accurately handling the word of truth!” That's that Bible you hold in your hand. 2 Timothy 3:16, we know very well, it says that “All Scripture is inspired by God.” It's the product of the breath of God. He formed those words as I'm forming my words right now from my own breath. They're His words, every word of it! Well think about it, if that's true, and it is, then the character of God demands that the words that come out of His mouth, that book you hold in your hand, that those are true and there's no error in them because God can't be in error. The character of God demands it. Numbers 23:19, “God is not a man that He should lie.” Hebrews 6:18, “...it is impossible for God to lie.” So Scripture itself claims that it is, in fact, perfectly pure without error.

Let's go to a second Biblical argument, and that is “The Statements of Our Lord,” the statements of our Lord. Let me first of all show you that He affirms it all. He affirms what we call the Old Testament. Turn to Luke, look at Luke chapter 11. Now, He's talking about the fact that the people of the first century were mistreating Him just as they had mistreated other Prophets and the Apostles as they would the Apostles eventually. And then He makes this statement, verse 50,

Luke 11:50, “so that the blood of all the prophets (so those true spokesmen for God), shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation.” And then notice how He defines all time, all human history, “from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house *of God*; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.”

Now, when you read that in English, you might not get the point because our Old Testaments run from Genesis to Malachi, but in the Jewish canon of the first century, same content, but it was arranged differently. It was arranged, it started in Genesis and it ended with Chronicles. Well guess what the examples Jesus uses are here in these verses. The story of Abel is early in the first book of the Hebrew canon as it is in ours, Genesis 4. The story of Zechariah is near the end of the last book in the Jewish canon, 2 Chronicles 24. So, Jesus, by making this statement, validates the entire Hebrew canon as the Scripture, the same content as our Old Testament, but just in a different order. So He validates it all, and everything that's written there, but He also validates it down to its individual words. You remember in Matthew, chapter 4, verse 4, Jesus is responding to Satan's temptation, and He quotes from Deuteronomy. And remember what He affirms here, Jesus says to Satan, “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE BUT ON (What?) EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.” That's what Jesus believed about the Bible. In Mark 7, verse 13, He referred to the Old Testament, the entire Old Testament in your Bibles, as the “word of God.” In John 10, verse 35, He makes this comment about a Psalm; Psalm 82:6, He quotes it and then He says this, “the Scripture cannot be broken.” If you've studied Greek, you have used the verb, ‘broken’ here, in your conjugation, memorizing the conjugation of the Greek verb, it's ‘*luó*,’ it's ‘to loose.’ He's saying, “Listen, the Scripture can't be loosed, it can't be broken. You can't unbind it; it all holds together as one. All Scripture possesses an absolute authority which cannot be broken.” In John 17:17, Jesus is praying to the Father, and He says, “Sanctify them in (by means of) the truth;” and then He says this, “Your word is (What?) truth,” it's truth, there's no error in it.

But Jesus also affirms the inerrancy of Scripture back in our text, turn there with me. Matthew, chapter 5, I promised you I'd get back here, Matthew, chapter 5, verse 18, He says, “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law (Now watch this.) until all is accomplished.” Now, the Greek word for ‘accomplished’ here

is different than the word 'fulfill' back in verse 17. Literally, the word 'accomplish' means 'to happen or to come to pass.' You hear what Jesus is saying? He's saying, "It's easier for the universe to end than for anything in Scripture to fail to happen, to fail to come to pass." Jesus was emphasizing its utter trustworthiness, its truthfulness, its certainty, down to the smallest letter and the smallest pen stroke—it's going to happen! Whatever it says is so true that it will happen. Jesus says you can have confidence in the Scripture you hold in your hand. It is completely trustworthy in every detail. We have it on His authority, and wow, what authority is that! I love what one author says, Wordsworth writes this, he says, "The Incarnate Word" that's our Lord, "The Incarnate Word sets His seal on the written Word." Now listen to his argument. Since Jesus is God, the inspiration of the Old Testament is here authenticated by God Himself. Is Jesus God? He is. And what does Jesus, the God-Man, God, affirm about the Old Testament? He tells you, "It's God's very Word!" Jesus affirmed "It's Permanent Authority," "It's Verbal and Plenary Inspiration," and "It's Complete Inerrancy."

There's one final attribute of Scripture that He affirms, and that is "It's Careful Preservation," it's careful preservation. Now, this isn't directly stated in our text, but it is clearly implied in Jesus' comments. Look again at verse 18. When Jesus says, neither "the smallest letter or pen stroke shall pass away," what is He implying? He's implying that, in the first century, they possessed the Word of God in writing. In other words, that God had and will preserve His Word. You see, in Jesus' day, they didn't have any of the original autographs still. They didn't have the actual scrolls on which Moses wrote. They didn't have the actual scroll on which Isaiah wrote his prophecy when he first wrote seven-hundred years before Christ. No, what they had in the first century is what we have. They had copies of copies of copies that could be traced back to the originals. But Jesus always referred to those copies (As what?) as the Scripture. In fact, the Bible that Jesus most often quoted is *The Septuagint*, a Greek translation made from those Hebrew copies. Now, don't misunderstand, Jesus wasn't saying that God's Word has been preserved in one specific place or one specific translation, like some of the people who believe, you know, that God inspired the King James Version, and even the Greek needs to be compared against it. That's not what Jesus is saying here. But He was clearly implying that God had and would preserve His Word in written form until it all came to pass.

Now let's just think about this for a moment. Let's step back, and again, stay with me, this is really going to be helpful, I think, for you, because these are questions we get as believers. Let's think about the manuscripts from which we got our Bibles. Let's start with "The Number of Existing Manuscripts." You see, as with other ancient documents, our English Bibles were translated from ancient manuscripts. In the case of the Bible, from Greek and Hebrew primarily, there's a little bit of Aramaic in the Old Testament, but primarily Greek and Hebrew. We have more ancient manuscript copies of the Bible than exist of any other ancient document. Let's start with the Old Testament. With the Old Testament, we have 3,000 manuscripts in Hebrew, and we have 1,500 of the Greek *Septuagint*. The New Testament, we have 25,000 manuscripts! Just to put that in sort of a point of comparison, the second largest number of copies of manuscripts we have for an ancient document is Homer's *Iliad*, with a total of 1,800 manuscripts and only 643 of those predate the Middle Ages.

Now let's talk about those 25,000 manuscripts we have of the New Testament. First of all, there are more than 5,700 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Again, to put that in comparison, less than 20 each exist for most of the classical Greek and Roman works that maybe you studied in college. The Greek manuscripts of the New Testament date from 125 A.D. to about 1200 A.D. There are some fragments as small as a postage stamp, others are complete manuscripts of the entire New Testament, but 5,700 Greek manuscripts. We have more than 19,000 manuscripts of early translations of the Bible into languages such as Latin, Syriac, and Coptic. We have more than a million quotations in the early Church Fathers. In fact, scholars estimate that we could reconstruct almost our entire New Testament from the quotations of the New Testament in the writings of the early Church Fathers. Our Bibles were translated from a synthesis of comparing those ancient Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. We have a huge amount of evidence. That's the number.

Let's consider, secondly, "The Dates of the Existing Manuscripts." In addition to the sheer numbers of manuscripts, it's equally remarkable how soon after the original documents were written that the surviving copies we have were made. Again, as with other ancient documents, you often find, or I should say, with other ancient documents, you often find a lot of time, a huge gap between when the originals were written and when the surviving copies were made. "The biblical manuscripts," don't miss this, "date closer to the original autographs than any other

ancient document.” For example, take the *Iliad* again, the time gap between the original and the earliest manuscript copy that we possess is 400 years. The earliest manuscripts of most of the classic Greek and Roman works were copied 700 to 1,400 years after the originals. But with the New Testament, we have a fragment of John's Gospel, the “Ryland's Papyrus,” which I've actually seen, that dates to about 25 years after John wrote his Gospel. We have copies of complete New Testament books within 100 years of the original. And we have complete manuscripts of all the books of the New Testament within 150 years of the originals. Compare that with the other ancient documents that you studied in school. Not one of your professors ever said, “Well, you know, we just can't be sure that Plato wrote that.” And they wouldn't do that with the Bible either if they didn't hate what it said.

So, let's go on to talk about “The Agreement of the Manuscripts That We Have,” the agreement. When you look at the existing New Testament manuscripts, there are about 10,000 variant readings when you compare all of those manuscripts. Now that sounds bad until I tell you this, the vast majority of those variants are spelling and word order. When you discount those obvious variants, 99% of the existing manuscripts we have agree. Among the remaining 1% of what we could call ‘significant variants’ in the readings between the manuscripts, not a single Biblical doctrine is affected or changed. In other words, it's not like one teaches one thing and another teaches another. Not one doctrine is affected. In addition to that, and this is really helpful, modern translations, like our New American Standard or the English Standard Version, put all of those significant variants in the marginal notes. You know what that means? That means you can be confident that between the text in your Bible and the marginal notes, “You have the inspired Scriptures in your hand.”

You say, “Well, are there passages that there are questions about?” Yes, there are only three. Let me give them to you. When you compare the manuscripts, there are only three questionable passages. Number one, what's called “The long ending of Mark,” Mark 16, verses 9-20. You can go listen to when I taught through Mark, you can get all the data there. I'm not going to give it to you here, I'm just going to say, in a sort of overarching way, “It's probably not authentic;” it probably wasn't the ending of Mark's Gospel. However, I will say, “When I taught Mark, I taught through it and there's nothing there that contradicts anything else in the rest of Scripture.”

Second questionable passage, John 7:53 through 8:11, that's "The story of the woman caught in adultery." Most scholars agree that "This account is almost certainly authentic; it really happened and very likely was a part of John's Gospel. It just wasn't 'there' in John's Gospel," and that's clear. Again, if I had time, I could take you and show you how it appears to be inserted at that point.

Third passage, 1 John 5:7-8, that section "contains a statement that's found only in a couple really late manuscripts; it is almost certainly not authentic." In fact, it's so clearly not authentic that our translations only include it in a marginal note; you won't even see it in the text. It's in the margin as a 'maybe.' Now, let me just tell you what that means. The fact that we know that those are the only three main disputed passages in the Scripture is itself a testimony to the reliability of the text that's been passed down to us. You have the text of Scripture, you have the marginal notes, you know the three passages that are debated—you have a reliable text in front of you!

Let me give you a powerful illustration of just how remarkably Scripture has been preserved. It's found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. As you probably know, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947, in the caves at Qumran, near the north end of the Dead Sea. Some of you have visited there with me; we stood in that very place. The centerpiece of the Dead Sea Scroll discovery was a complete scroll of Isaiah. You see a portion of it on the screen behind me. That scroll of Isaiah was written between 100 and 200 years before Jesus. Now, scholars compared that Isaiah scroll to the Masoretic Hebrew text that we already had and that was used to translate our Bibles. Now let me, first of all, set some context. Before the Dead Sea Scrolls, the oldest complete Old Testament Hebrew manuscript dated to 900 to 1,000 A.D. So in other words, the Isaiah scroll was copied 1,000 years before the manuscript evidence we had. So wouldn't you expect over 1,000 years, as copies and copies and copies, there would be some deterioration? Not so! When scholars compared the Isaiah scroll to the manuscript we already had that was used to translate our Bibles, they discovered they're almost identical. For example, when they compared Isaiah 1 in the Dead Sea Scroll to the Hebrew text from which our Old Testament was translated, they found only 20 minor differences—most of them were spelling. Only once do they even use a different Hebrew word. Not one variant affects the meaning of the text. Over 1,000 years and there was no substantive change! That's how God has faithfully preserved His Word! The bottom line is this, don't let anyone shake your faith in this, the bottom line is this, that by every standard that is used

with ancient documents, the evidence for the reliability of the Biblical documents is overwhelming! We have more manuscript evidence, we have older manuscript evidence, and we have huge agreement between the manuscripts we possess.

The only reason anyone ever calls it into question is because they hate what it says. They don't call writings that we have a lot less of, and that are a lot newer, they don't call those into question unless they're the Bible. If they didn't hate what it says, no one would ever question its authenticity and reliability. It has been remarkably preserved. That's part of the point Jesus makes in Matthew 5. I mean, He often accused the Jews in His day of undermining the meaning of the Scripture, but He never said they had a flawed version of the Scripture, a corrupted version. In fact, He used the same Hebrew Bible, the same Greek translation they used, and He called both of them (What?) "The Word of God." The Spirit who revealed the Scripture, who breathed it all out has also powerfully, remarkably preserved it in written form.

Turn to 1 Peter, chapter 1, Peter makes this statement here, it's really remarkable. 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 23, he says, "You have been born again (the new birth came) not of (by) seed which is perishable but imperishable (It's the Word of God.), *that is*, through the living and (Notice what He says.) enduring word of God." And then He quotes from Isaiah, which was 700 years earlier, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF THE GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER." And then He adds this statement at the end of verse 25, "and this is the word which was preached to you." He says, "Listen, when Isaiah wrote what He wrote 700 years before, that's what has been preached to you." This is what the Scriptures claim for themselves.

So the question is, "So what? What does having a high view of Scripture, like Jesus had, how does that affect our practical daily treatment of the Scripture?" Well, if we have a truly high view of Scripture like He did, then we can see what our response will be like His response was. In other words, we'll treat it like He did. Let me give you a couple of ways Jesus treated the Bible in light of how he viewed it.

Number one, "He read it all and He expected others to read it." Luke 24:27, "Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself (What?) in all the Scriptures." Jesus grew in His knowledge of that. As a human being, He grew in wisdom, He

grew in His understanding. He studied it, He read it, and He studied it, and He expected others to read it. Often, you'll find Jesus saying something like this in Mark 12:10, "Have you not even read this Scripture?" Have you not read? Have you not read? So let me ask you as a disciple of Jesus Christ, "Have you not read?"

Number two, "He memorized it and used it against temptation." We saw it in Matthew 4, three times Satan comes with temptation and what does Jesus do? Three times He says, "It is written...It is written...It is written." He did what Paul writes in Ephesians 6, He pulled out "the sword of the Spirit." You see, when you're in the middle of temptation, you can't use the whole Bible. You have to have a little barb of truth, a little statement of truth, just like He did, to fight against that temptation. That's how He fought temptation; it's how He expects you too as well.

Number three, "He believed it could be understood, so He studied it, and He rebuked others for not understanding it." Luke 2:46, we see Him studying. Remember again, He grew in His development as a human being, He had to grow in His understanding of the Scripture. His parents found Him in the temple at twelve, "sitting in the midst of the teachers (Doing what?), both listening to them and asking them questions." He was a student of the Bible, and He understood it, and He said we could understand it. He made it clear that we can understand the meaning of the propositional truth in Scripture. We live in a postmodern era where a lot of postmodernists want to say, "Oh listen, it's propositional truth, you can't really understand that." That's not what Jesus believed. In John 17:8, He's praying and He says, "Father...the words which you Gave Me, I have given to them." Now listen to this, "they received *them* and truly understood...and they believed." That's exactly what Jesus still thinks is true. You can read His words, you can, by the Spirit's help, understand His words, and you can believe His words.

By the way, the only reason you can't understand God's Word, He says it in John 8:43, He says, "You don't receive My words, you cannot receive My words, you lack the power to receive My words" (Paraphrase), and He says in verse 47, "because you're not of God," (You don't have the right antenna.). You know, if I make a call to my wife on my phone, to her phone, you can't pick up that signal because it's not for you. Same thing is true with the Word of God. If you're not His, you miss the signal, the call is not coming to you.

Number four, “He obeyed the Scripture and expected us to obey.” John 15:10, He says, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love just as I have kept My Father's commandments.” He said, “I've kept His commands; you need to keep His commands and Mine as well.” Luke 8:21, you remember a crowd was gathered around Him, He was teaching in a house in Capernaum, and His mother and brother showed up. His brothers thought He was out of His mind, and they were there to take Him back, take Him home, and the people around Him said, “Hey!” they passed word through and said, “Your mom and brothers are outside.” And Jesus said this in Luke 8:21, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.” Luke 11:28, “Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.” Christian, Jesus expects you to obey what you learn from the Scriptures, including what we've learned this morning.

Number five, “He taught the Scripture as the focus of His ministry and demanded that we place ourselves under its authority as well.” I love Mark 1, because you find Jesus teaching again and again in the synagogue, teaching the word of God in the synagogue. And you remember, He works miracles and the crowd shows up wanting Him to work more miracles, and in Mark 1:38, He says, let's leave here, “Let us go somewhere else...so I may preach the word because that's why I came” (Paraphrase). So, what did Jesus say about Himself? John 14:6, “I am (What?) the truth.” I am the truth. In a world adrift in relativism, Jesus claims that everything He is, and everything He says, and everything He does is absolutely, objectively true, and anything that contradicts Him is false. That's what Jesus claims.

So what did Jesus say about the Bible you hold in your hand? “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.” He believed that the Bible was God's very word down to the last word, letter, and pen stroke, and He expects you, Christian, to believe the same thing. You are called to adopt His view of the Scripture.

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for our time, and thank You for Your Word. Lord, thank You for the clarity of it. Thank You for the teaching of our Lord. Lord, help us, as His disciples, to truly adopt His own high view of Scripture. And Lord, forgive us for being influenced by the world around us, for listening to mere men and their opinions rather than Your eternal Son made flesh.

And Father, for those who are here this morning who don't know You, may they trust Him as the way, the truth, and the life; that no one comes to You, Father, except through Him. May they humble themselves in repentance and faith in Him, even this morning. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.