



# **Peninsula City Church**

**Anchored**

**The Authority of Your Bible**

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# The Authority of Your Bible

## Introduction

**Q.** Why do some think that they need to defend the authority of the Bible?

If we stop and look around, we can see the attack on various pieces of literature. These attacks have been part of what is known as the cancel culture. So, of these that have been cancelled have some of Dr Suess's works like *The Cat in the Hat* through to some of the "Classic Western literature, from Homer to Shakespeare, Mark Twain".<sup>1</sup> We may feel the need to stand up for the right or even the authority of some of these works, whether right or wrong. Now there may be some literature that, well, it may be suitable for it to go, haha. However, some have stood the test of time as valuable pieces of literature.

Well, what about the Bible? Do we feel that it will be next to be attacked? Some might feel the need to defend its authority. It is in light of it having been said that it seems to be in the sights of those who would like to see it go. The sooner, the better. Since, it has been said that,

"After all, isn't there slavery in the Bible, alongside discrimination against women, the handicapped, and non-Jews? Isn't there intolerance of gender-fluid identities and racism regarding certain nations? The Bible even calls for genocide against the seven Canaanite nations, and Amalek!"<sup>2</sup>

Too many Bible is out of date and needs to be cancelled. The call for this to happen will only get stronger. So, should we stand up for the authority of the Bible? Or else should we just let things ride and trust the Lord? Maybe we might need to do both? Is this whole thing a new issue, or can the cancelling, restricting, or destroying the Bible happened before?

## 1. We have been here before

**Q.** Really, when have we been here before?

However, this is not a new issue. The Bible has been banned from being owned by the public or even destroyed various times throughout history. Its authority has been challenged throughout history. It has been said that the word,

"Authority comes from a Latin word meaning 'influence' or 'command.' It answers the question 'Who is in charge?'"<sup>3</sup>

It has been the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament 'OT') and the Bible as Christ-followers read (the OT and New Testament). It has been attacked for various reason, so religious other not. But it is not a new matter. For example, the following is a brief overview of this matter. That is,

"And (*the officials of Antiochus*) rent in pieces the books of the Torah which they found and set them on fire. And wheresoever was found with any a book of the covenant, and if any consented to the law, the king's sentence delivered him to death."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The woke left wants to erase classic literature for kids." <https://www.startribune.com/the-woke-left-wants-to-erase-classic-literature-for-kids/600020316/> (1<sup>st</sup> April 2021).

<sup>2</sup> "Cancel culture: Is banning the Bible next?" <https://www.israelhayom.com/opinions/cancel-culture-is-banning-the-bible-next/> (9<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Myers, Jeff. *Understanding the Faith: A Survey of Christian Apologetics*. (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit, 2016), 58.

<sup>4</sup> "The Apocrypha, 1 Maccabees: Alexander the Great: 1:56-57."

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Maccabees%201&version=GNT> (9<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

Flavius Josephus recorded that,

“And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed, and those [Jews] with whom they were found miserably perished also (Antiquities of the Jews 12.5.4).”<sup>5</sup>

“Diocletian occupied the imperial throne from AD 284-305. In AD 303, he inaugurated a series of merciless persecutions upon those who professed the religion of Christ. All assemblies of Christians were forbidden, and churches were ordered to be torn down. Four different edicts were issued, each excelling the preceding in intensity. One edict ordered the burning of every copy of the Bible—the first instance in [Christian] history when the Scriptures were made an object of attack.”<sup>6</sup>

“During the Dark Ages (AD 500-1500), Rome burned Bibles along with their owners.”<sup>7</sup>

“Decree of the Council of Toulouse (1229 CE): ‘We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old or New Testament, but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.’

The fate of William Tyndale in 1536 CE: William Tyndale was burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English. According to Tyndale, the Church forbid owning or reading the Bible to control and restrict the teachings and to enhance their own power and importance.”<sup>8</sup>

“In France (1800-1900), Rationalism found a champion in Francois Marie Arouer—popularly known by his pen-name, Voltaire—a deist who produced several volumes brimming with hatred for the Bible. No one in Europe did as much to destroy faith in the Word of God as Voltaire. France rejected the Scriptures, tied a copy of the Bible to the tail of a donkey, and dragged it through the streets to the city dump, where it was ceremoniously burned.”

“In America (1700-1800), the battle against the Bible was led by men like Thomas Paine and Robert Ingersoll.”

“By fire and other means, a festive, expressive destruction of the Book of Books was at the center of Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass—when, on November 9, 1938, 1,400 synagogues were set on fire in Nazi Germany. In the small town of Fritzlar in Hessen, Torah scrolls were rolled along Nikolaus Street as Hitler Youth rode their bicycles over them. In Vienna, by that time part of the Reich, Jews dressed in the robe and decorations of the Ark were marched and chased in downtown streets with torn Torah scrolls tied to their backs; in Frankfurt, Jews were forced to tear the Torah themselves and then burn it. In Berlin, Germans carried the scrolls from the Fasanen Street synagogue to Wittenberg Square and burned them there. As Torah scrolls burned in a synagogue’s yard in Düsseldorf, German men, some wearing the robes of the rabbis and cantors, danced around the fire.”<sup>9</sup>

The Bible's authority has been questioned or banned as harmful or even as a subversive book, which challenges the current culture. It will not be the last time either. But it is still around and being read by millions of people around the world today. The Spirit of God is still using it to

<sup>5</sup> “Antiquities of the Jews — Book XII.” <https://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-12.html> (9<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

<sup>6</sup> “The Holy Scriptures—Indestructible.” <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/31-the-holy-scriptures-indestructible> (9<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

<sup>7</sup> “A Time When the Bible was Banned and Burned.” <https://romecorruptedchristianity.wordpress.com/2013/07/02/a-time-when-the-bible-was-banned-and-burned/> (9<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

<sup>8</sup> “Why Christians Were Denied Access to Their Bible for 1,000 Years.” [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-christians-were-denied-access-to-their-bible-for-1000-years\\_b\\_3303545](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-christians-were-denied-access-to-their-bible-for-1000-years_b_3303545) (9<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

<sup>9</sup> “Why the Nazis Burned the Hebrew Bible.” <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/confino-alon/why-the-nazis-burned-the-hebrew-bible/> (9<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

transform, teach, and guide lives worldwide. It is still the number one selling piece of literature today. It is still the number one seller of all time. That is according to the Guinness World Records,

“Although it is impossible to obtain exact figures, there is little doubt that the Bible is the world's best-selling and most widely distributed book. A survey by the Bible Society concluded that around 2.5 billion copies were printed between 1815 and 1975, but more recent estimates put the number at more than 5 billion.

By the end of 1995, combined global sales of Today's English Version (Good News) New Testament and Bible (copyright for which is held by the Bible Societies) exceeded 17.75 million copies, and the whole Bible had been translated into 349 languages; 2,123 languages have at least one book of the Bible in that language.”<sup>10</sup>

“But what are the top 10 best-selling books of all time? The following updated 2020 ranking will show you this historic bestseller list... 1. The Bible is the best-selling book of all time, having sold around 5 billion copies to date... 2. Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung... known as the “Little Red Book”, is the world's second best-selling book, having sold around 1.1 billion copies worldwide... 3. The Quran... it sold around 800 million copies to date... 4. The Lord of The Rings... To date, it sold around 155 million copies all over the world.”<sup>11</sup>

So, we can see that the Bible is still going strong today. It is despite the continual attacks from the enemy of God and of our souls. There is a theological idea that God is the keeper and protector of His Word to humanity. That is, it will not be destroyed. It does not matter who tries to do so. God is the one who has spoken His Word to humanity and has overseen some of these words recorded in the Bible. It has been said that,

“The Bible is about God and what He has done, is doing, and will do in the world and for all eternity.”<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, the Bible has its own divine authority and does not need to gain authority from any other source. As it has been said,

“If the Bible is authorised by God, trustworthy, and clearly communicated in written form, then it is reasonable to regard it as having authority.”<sup>13</sup>

Based on the truth that the Bible got its authority from God, we trust what it has to say. So, I will now look at some of the internal evidence for the authority of the Bible. That is what the Bible has to say regarding itself. Some may argue that this is merely circular reasoning appealing to itself. However, the various writers of the Bible lived in different eras and sometimes in multiple nations. So, they could not communicate with each other to create a fraudulent document.

## **2. The authority of the Hebrew Bible, i.e., the Old Testament**

**Q.** Is the Old Testament still part of the authoritative Word of God?

The Hebrew Bible or the OT is the Word of God. It was said, shown, or explained to the writers of the OT. God's Spirit guided the writers in what to write and how to write it. He used the personality, life experience, and training of each of the writers. That is why the letter, books, wisdom, and poetry is so varied. Here we will briefly review what the Bible has to say about the Hebrew Bible or OT.

<sup>10</sup> “Best-selling book.” <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/best-selling-book-of-non-fiction> (9<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

<sup>11</sup> “The 10 Best-selling Books in History.” <https://www.alltopeverything.com/top-10-best-selling-books-of-all-time/> (30<sup>th</sup> March 2021).

<sup>12</sup> Myers, *Understanding the Faith*, 39.

<sup>13</sup> Myers, *Understanding the Faith*, 60.

For example, Moses heard from God, and then he wrote down what he had heard. It would be for God's people to have as they grew into a nation and worldwide. That is,

<sup>3</sup> “Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances (or *judgments*); and all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!’ <sup>4</sup> Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. Then he arose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel” (Ex 24:3-4 NASB).

<sup>9</sup> “So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. <sup>10</sup> Then Moses commanded them, saying, ‘At the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, <sup>11</sup> when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing... <sup>24</sup> It came about when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, <sup>25</sup> that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, <sup>26</sup> ‘Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you” Deut 31:9-11,24-26 NASB).

Joshua was now ready to die after bringing Israel into the Promised Land. He had allocated the land, and it was now up to the people to take the Promised Land. However, before he died, he reminded them of the Torah and what the Lord had for them, which Joshua had recorded. That is,

<sup>26</sup> “And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. <sup>27</sup> And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus, it shall be for a witness against you, lest you deny your God” (Jos. 24:26-27 NASB).

As time went on, the nation of Israel increased, but they forgot the Word of the Lord. One day it was rediscovered by the high priest, and he told Josiah the king. So, king Josiah read the Torah to all of his people. That is,

“Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, ‘I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD.’ And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, who read it. (2 Kings 22:8 NASB).

“And the king went up to the house of the LORD and all the people of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great; and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant, which was found in the house of the LORD” (2 Kings 23:2 NASB).

When Judah returned to Jerusalem from their Babylonian exile, Ezra read the Torah to all who were present, Neh 8:1-8. It turned into a holy day as they all heard the Torah read to them. That is,

<sup>1</sup> “And all the people gathered as one at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel. <sup>2</sup> Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of people and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. <sup>3</sup> He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law... <sup>8</sup> They read from the book, from the law of God, translating (or *explaining*) to give the sense so that they understood the reading” (Ne 8:1-4,8 NASB).

Samuel the prophet also wrote down what he had been given to record,

“Then Samuel told the people the ordinances (or *judgments*) of the kingdom and wrote them in the book and placed it before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house” (1 Sam 10:25 NAS)

The writer of Psalm 119 saw God’s word as eternal. That is, they said,

“Forever, O LORD, *Your word* is settled in heaven” (Ps 119:89 NASB).

The Lord also spoke to the prophets, and they recorded His words, which has become Scripture. Some examples are the following,

The prophet Isaiah also recorded the words of God in his letter. For example,

“Therefore, the Lord God of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel declares, ‘Ah, I will be relieved of My adversaries, And avenge Myself on My foes’” (Is 1:24 NASB cf. also 3:15; 7:7).

“This is the word which the LORD spoke earlier concerning Moab” (Is 16:13 NASB; cf. Is 15:1-9).

“Now go, write it on a tablet in their presence and inscribe it on a scroll, That it may serve in the time to come As a witness forever” (Is 30:8 NASB).

Jeremiah, the prophet, also recorded what God had said to him. That is,

<sup>1</sup> “The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, <sup>2</sup> to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah... <sup>4</sup> Now the word of the Lord came to me saying... <sup>11</sup> The word of the Lord came to me saying... <sup>12</sup> Then the Lord said to me... <sup>13</sup> The word of the Lord came to me a second time saying... <sup>14</sup> Then the Lord said to me...” (Jer 1:2,4,11,12,13,14 NASB; cf. also 1:15,19; 2:5)

<sup>1</sup> “The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, <sup>2</sup> ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book”’” (Jer 30:1-2 NASB; cf. 36:1-2).

“The word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him” (Ez 1:3 NASB)

<sup>1</sup> “Then He (the *Lord*) said to me, ‘Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!’... ‘And I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children; and you shall say to them, “Thus says the Lord God” (Ez 2:1,4 NASB; cf. also 3:1,4,11,13,27; 6:1; 7:1).

Daniel the prophet read Jeremiah the prophet as the Lord's word, and he obeyed it as such. That is,

<sup>1</sup> “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— <sup>2</sup> in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years” (Dan 9:1-2 NASB).

Cf. <sup>11</sup> ““And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. <sup>12</sup> Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the LORD, ‘for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation’” (Jer 25:11-12 NASB; 29:10).

How did Jesus view the OT?

He saw it as His Father's word to the nation of Israel, who had rejected it. That is,

<sup>49</sup> “For this reason also the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, <sup>50</sup> so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, <sup>51</sup> 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. <sup>52</sup> Woe to you lawyers (i.e., *experts in the Mosaic Law*)! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering” (Lk 11:49-52 NASB).

He saw it as supremely authoritative, and He showed this when responding to satan,

<sup>4</sup> “But He answered and said, ‘It is written (He quoted Deut 8:3) “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” ... <sup>7</sup> ‘Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written,’ (He quoted Deut 6:16) ... <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go, Satan! For it is written (He quoted Deut 6:13; 10:20)” (Matt 4:4,7,10 NASB).

He saw the OT as something that He would fulfil and not do away with, as He said. That is,

<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, 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” (Matt 5:17-19 NASB).

Jesus both fulfilled and explained the OT about Himself. That is,

- One of Jesus’ first sermons in His hometown was to do with Him being the fulfilment of what Isaiah said: Lk 4:18-21; cf. Is 61:1-2, this alludes to the Year of Jubilee Lev 25:8-55.

<sup>27</sup> “And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures... <sup>44</sup> Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Lk 24:27,44 NASB).

Jesus saw the OT as God’s word as being relevant, and He also introduced the gospel,

<sup>16</sup> “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then, the gospel of the Kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it... <sup>29</sup> But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them...’ <sup>31</sup> But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets...’ (Lk 16:16,29,31 NASB).

- Jesus also settled theological error by the religious leaders by using God's word from the OT: For example, Matt 19:4,5; quoting Gen 1:27; 2:24; cf. also Mk 12:24-27; citing Ex 3:6,15; also see Jn 10:35; cf. also vv31-34; Ps 82:6.

How did Mark view the OT?

Well, in Mk 7:8-13, he recorded Jesus responding to the religious leader about the word of God that,

<sup>8</sup> “Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men. <sup>9</sup> He (Jesus) was also saying to them, ‘You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. <sup>10</sup> For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother, is to be put to death’; <sup>11</sup> but you say, ‘If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to

God),'<sup>12</sup> you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; <sup>13</sup> thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that" (NASB). Mark recognised that Jesus was quoting from the OT, i.e., Ex 20:12; 21:17; and Deut 5:16.

Mark quoted Jesus connecting the Scriptures with the power of God that is the word of God. That is,

"Jesus said to them, 'Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures, or the power of God?'" (Mk 12:24 NASB).

How did Matthew view the OT?

Well, in Matt 1:22, which was quoting Is 7:14, Matthew pointed out that "which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet..." that is the prophet, Isaiah.

As was mentioned earlier, Matthew recorded Jesus declaring that the OT was supremely authoritative, and He showed this when responding to satan,

<sup>4</sup> "But He answered and said, 'It is written (He quoted Deut 8:3) "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" ... <sup>7</sup> 'Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written,' (He quoted Deut 6:16) ... <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him, 'Go, Satan! For it is written (He quoted Deut 6:13; 10:20)" (Matt 4:4,7,10 NASB).

Matthew recorded the truth that Jesus saw the OT was about Himself.

"Jesus said to them, 'Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone; This came about from the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes?'" (Matt. 21:42 NAS)

How did Luke view the OT?

Well, he also understood what Jesus was saying about the OT that it was the Scriptures. He recorded them as to be the authority on who Jesus was as God. That is,

"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then, the gospel of the Kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it" (Lk 16:16 NASB).

<sup>27</sup> "And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures... <sup>44</sup> Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Lk 24:27,44 NASB).

Luke in the book of Acts quoting Peter said that he said that,

"this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke by the mouth of David..." (Acts 1:16); see the quote from the Psalms,

"Even My close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate My bread, Has lifted up his heel against Me" (Ps 41:9 NASB).

See also Acts chapter three where Luke quoted Peter declaring that Moses and the prophets were given God's authoritative word about Jesus Christ. That is,

<sup>18</sup> "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled... <sup>21</sup> "whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. <sup>22</sup> For Moses truly said... <sup>24</sup> And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward" (Acts 3:18,21,22,24 NASB).

Luke also recorded Paul's defence before King Agrippa regarding his belief in Jesus Christ used the OT as his source. That is,

<sup>22</sup> "So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; <sup>23</sup> that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22-23 NASB).

How did John view the OT?

He recorded a conversation that Philip had with Nathanael in which he mentioned the OT being authoritative regarding Jesus.

"Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. (Jn. 1:45 NAS)

John recorded Jesus speaking of the OT as 'the Scriptures,'

"You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me" (Jn. 5:39 NAS)

How did Paul view the OT?

Well, in his last letter before he died, he made a crucial all-encompassing statement regarding the OT. That is, he pointed out that,

"All Scripture (*here he is referring to the OT because the NT was not completed yet*) is given by inspiration of God...' (2 Tim 3:16). That is, God breathed out His Word.<sup>14</sup>

Paul in Rom 3:2 indicated that the whole OT is "the oracles (that is the sayings or Scriptures by a divine being) of God" (cf. also Acts 7:38).

"Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God" (Rom 3:2 NASB).

Stephen used similar language when speaking about the words of Moses as the oracles of God,

<sup>37</sup> "This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel... <sup>38</sup> This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you" (Acts 7:37a,38 NASB).

Paul also quoted Isaiah as being the word of God. The word Law may refer to either the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), the whole OT or part thereof. In this case, Paul was referring to one book that is Isaiah.

"In the Law, it is written, 'By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,' says the Lord" (1 Cor 14:21 NASB).

Cf. Isaiah where Paul was quoting from, <sup>11</sup> "Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, <sup>12</sup> He who said to them, 'Here is rest, give rest to the weary, and here is repose,' but they would not listen. <sup>13</sup> So the word of the Lord to them will be, "order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there, that they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared and taken captive" (Is 28:11-13 NASB).

<sup>14</sup> We might say metaphorically that the Scriptures are God's breath." Clark, Gordon H. *God's Hammer: The Bible and its Critics*. (New Mexico: The Trinity Foundation, 1995), 4-5.

Finally, we may ask how did Peter view the OT?

So, in 2 Pet 1:16-21, he said that he was one of those who saw and heard what Jesus had to say. Also, the OT prophecies were not from people, but instead, they were from God. That is, they are God's own Words, given to people to record; he was one of those who recorded these words.

<sup>16</sup> "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. <sup>17</sup> For when He received honour and glory from God the Father, such an [h]utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased' (Matt 3:17)— <sup>18</sup>, and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain (Matt 17:1,5-6). <sup>19</sup> So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but people moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:16-21 NASB).

Peter also called the rest of the OT Scripture. He said this in light of those who were twisting Scripture it for their own ends and destruction. That is,

"...the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Pet 3:16 NAS).

So, as we have seen from this brief overview, the OT was seen and still is held to be God's divine and authoritative Word. It was given to humanity to reveal who he is and how He acts towards His own and those who reject His Word. There is much more that could be said here, but I am sure that you get the sense of the authority that Jesus and others saw in the OT.

### 3. The authority of the New Testament

**Q.** Why bother reading the New Testament as being authoritative anyway?

Here we will now briefly look at what the New Testament (NT) writers say about it as authoritative or trustworthy. There will not be as much regarding the OT since the NT was still being written at the time. However, it still has something to say about its being the Word of God and Scripture.

How did Paul view the NT?

In light of what has been seen regarding the phrase "the word of God" in the OT, Paul used it in some of his letters. So, he said that he was speaking God's word to people. For example,

"If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognise that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment" (1 Cor 14:37 NASB).

"And for this reason, we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe" (1 Thess 2:13 NASB).

Paul thought that his letters were important enough to be read to all Christ-followers. For example,

"Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother" (1 Cor 1:1 NASB). This is how he began most of his letters, of which many were to become part of the NT.

"I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren" (1 Thess 5:27 NASB).

"And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea" (Col 4:16 NASB).

We only have the letter to the Colossians as it was inspired, and the other one, although it may have been helpful, was not inspired. Only God knows why this is the case.

How did the other NT letter writers view the NT?

James wrote a letter to the scattered Church, which unbeknown to him would be inspired and become part of the NT.

“James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings” (Jas 1:1 NASB).

Peter also wrote two letters to the scattered Church that are now part of the Bible in the NT.

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen” (1 Pet. 1:1 NAS)

He also saw the OT and the NT preach as the foundational to believe to new life. He also quoted from Isaiah 40:6-8 as being as relevant for this spiritual life as the NT. That is,

<sup>22</sup> “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, <sup>23</sup> for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. <sup>24</sup> For, ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, <sup>25</sup> But the word of the Lord endures forever.’ And this is the word which was preached to you” (1 Pet 1:23-25 NASB).

Peter made a remarkable statement and called Paul’s writing Scripture.

<sup>14</sup> “Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, <sup>15</sup> and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, <sup>16</sup> as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction” (2 Pet 3:14-16 NASB).

So, in the passage in 2 Pet 3:14-16, Peter indicated that as far as he was concerned, Paul’s New Testament Letters were “Scripture,” like other Scripture (v16). It is a piece of robust internal evidence as to the authority of Paul’s writings as being inspired by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they were God-given and authoritative standing, and not merely Paul’s opinions.

In his first letter, John tells us that what he and others who were with Jesus and have written divinely inspired letters wrote from first-hand experience. That is, they had been with Jesus as He said and did what He did and said while on earth.

<sup>3</sup> “what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete (1 Jn. 1:4 NAS)” (1 Jn 1:3-4 NASB).

John was told to write down what he had seen in the Revelation given to him by the glorified Jesus Christ. John then warns the reads not to meddle with his writings or else. Namely,

<sup>10</sup> “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> saying, ‘Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea’ ... <sup>18</sup> I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; <sup>19</sup> and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part

from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. (Rev 1:10-11; 22:18-19 NASB).

So, the NT is the authoritative Word of God, as is the OT. It has ample internal evidence to claim it as the Word of God to His own. Although the NT writers might not have said as much as they did on the OT, it needs to be remembered that this was due to the NT still being written at the time. The NT was not compiled as we have it today until the fifth century, although there were attempts as early as the second century.

## Some Concluding Thoughts

**Q.** Why do some think they need to defend the authority of the Bible?

So, it is up to us if we hold to the idea that the Bible needing to be defended by Christ-followers. God is much stronger and cares more about His Word than we do. It is evident that despite the numerous attempts over time to get rid of it is still here, and those who have tried to do this are gone. So, take confidence in the God of the Bible that He can and does keep it.

Are you biblically literate and fluent in your Bible reading as the authoritative Word of God? By studying these Scripture references, are you able to explain why both the Old Testament and New Testament are the authoritative Word of God? What are some of the internal evidence in the Old Testament and New Testament that affirms its authority as the supremely authoritative Word of God to Israel and all Christ-followers?

We can be sure that the whole Bible that we have today is God's authoritative Word. We can take confidence in the truth given by the writers. That is, the OT Scripture is God's supremely authoritative Word today. That also means that the New Testament carries the authority of God. So, for us today, it does not matter what anyone says or writes about the Bible. The reason being is that it is God's word, and it will never fail or become obsolete.

Remember that we worship the God of the Bible and not the Bible. When God has done all that needs to be done, and He may choose to speak to His own some other way, He will do what He wants with His Word. Until then, His Word will not fail. God will continue to sanctify His our through His Word as Jesus asked Him to do,

“Sanctify (*set apart as uncommon*) them in the truth; Your word is truth” (Jn 17:17 NASB).

Remember that God is at work in our lives every day. One of the ways that He is at work is through His Word. In the hands of the Spirit of God, He continues working to transform us. That is,

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12 NASB).

The Word of God is the greatest authoritative statement that has ever been made, whether we believe it or not. If we believe it all good for us. If we do not, we will soon see whose Word is everlasting, yours or Gods, when we die.