

# Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

(January 25, 2009)

Dave Smith

Sermon manuscript

## Sermon Series: Show Stoppers

### **What's so SPECIAL about the Bible?**

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Study #3

#### **Introduction:** The Bible says... so?

It dawned on me as I was preparing my thoughts for last Sunday's exploration into the roots of evil and pain and suffering in the world that a major part of my answer derived from the teachings of the Bible.

It later dawned on me that there are quite a few people for whom the comment, "*The Bible says*" does not automatically end the discussion.

This morning, as we continue to investigate critical questions about life and God, we're going to consider the book that forms the basis for the Christian faith: The Bible.

At the outset I make no apologies for being a believer in the Bible. Over a lifetime of taking the Bible seriously, I have become increasingly convinced that it is what it says it is - the written Word of God.

This morning, I don't claim to be objective, fair and balanced, or neutral on the subject. You can consider the next few minutes a Christian's apologetic for holding the Bible in high esteem.

But I am not unaware that there are many, many people who are very, very suspicious about the Bible today. And there are lots and lots of reasons for their suspicions.

Often, people are skeptical about the Bible because of their perception that its teachings flatly contradict scientific fact. Exhibit #1 might be the current debate about teaching evolution/creationism/intelligent design in the public schools.<sup>1</sup>

Then there are those who object to the Bible on ethical grounds. They read commands from God ordering His people, the Jews, to carry out a wholesale destruction of certain cities and are appalled at this call to genocide.<sup>2</sup>

Or they read comments about slavery and note the Bible's silence on the topic, assuming (incorrectly) that all slavery is the kind of slavery we experienced in the United States prior to the Civil War, or that it is identical to the barbaric slave trade of today in many parts of the world.<sup>3</sup>

Then, people will read about gender based distinctives in both Old and New Testaments and discard the Bible as hopelessly out of date and insulting to women.<sup>4</sup>

A couple of years ago, some students at UTSA showed their disdain for the Bible by hosting what they called a "porn-for-porn" exchange. Their offer was to give a pornographic magazine to anyone who was willing to bring them a Bible.

---

<sup>1</sup> At the same time, there are tremendous resources that champion the Bible's accuracy when it addresses the issues of science. Just Google "the Bible and science"!

<sup>2</sup> While the Bible does record God's command that Israel destroy certain cities, there are reasons for this command when it is given. When we see the degraded and abominably inhumane practices of the people who were ordered destroyed, we can also see that the command to destroy is not unlike a physician removing a cancerous tumor to save a life. These people's lives were taken in order to preserve the possibility of wholesome life.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, in the ancient world, slaves were often indistinguishable by race, clothing or speech. Slaves could often buy themselves out of slavery and most could reasonably hope to be manumitted within ten or fifteen years.

<sup>4</sup> "The Bible and the Church have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of women's emancipation." --Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a leader in the movement for women's suffrage in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Kris Hochart invited me to go to this exchange, sponsored by the Atheist Agenda student club, to engage the students in meaningful conversation. In talking with them, we discovered that they were as offended by the Bible as we are by pornography.

Then, too, conspiracy theories abound about the origins of the Bible. Books and movies such as the da Vinci Code tell us that the New Testament was born out of political intrigue.

The real Jesus is depicted as a great, but clearly human teacher who many years after his death was made into a resurrected God by church leaders who made him so to gain legitimacy in the Roman Empire.<sup>5</sup>

There is great biblical revisionism going on today. Many scholars tell us that Moses didn't write the Law, that Isaiah didn't write Isaiah, that Daniel was written hundreds of years after Daniel lived, and that Paul almost certainly did not write 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.<sup>6</sup>

Television specials about the Bible try to help us get past biblical errors to discover the real Jesus and many challenge the Bible because of the miracles it records.<sup>7</sup>

Lots of folks believe that the Bible is scientifically impossible, historically unreliable, and culturally regressive. In short, there are quite a few folks who don't consider the Bible a "good book" at all.

As Robert Ingersoll said (1833-1899), "*The inspiration of the Bible depends upon the ignorance of the gentleman who reads it.*"<sup>8</sup>

So... have YOU ever questioned the reliability/authenticity/truthfulness of the Bible? Have YOU ever wondered if the Bible is really "inspired by God" as it claims to be? Have you ever talked with anyone who has expressed these wonderings?

<sup>5</sup> I would direct you to Darrell Bock's Breaking the da Vinci Code

<sup>6</sup> I recently had a discussion with a college student whose Bible professor assured her that this is the case with the Pastoral Epistles.

<sup>7</sup> I plan to address the theme of miracles next Sunday.

<sup>8</sup> Ingersoll was an outspoken abolitionist and free-thinker, famous for his atheism during the mid to late 1800's in the US. Voltaire, the Frenchman who died in 1778, said, "Another century and there will not be a Bible on earth."

Today I want to address these wonderings. And rather than speak FROM the Bible, I'm going to speak ABOUT the Bible.

I want to take these important questions about the Bible in a reasonable order. And the first question that a thinking person might wonder about a book (actually a collection of books) that is as old as the Bible, is whether the Bible we have is the Bible that was actually written.

Maybe you have played the party game, "Gossip." This is where one person whispers a message into the ear of the person sitting beside him who then whispers what he heard into the ear of the guy or gal sitting beside him. The message goes around the circle and the last person to hear the message tells others what he or she heard. Often the message is VERY different than the initial message!

Many people wonder if that is how it happened that we have the Bible we have today. That it is the copy of a copy of a translation of a translation of a translation. So -

- Were there problems of transmission?
- With the Bible being thousands of years old, what are the odds that what we have in front of us is what David or Isaiah or Paul wrote?
- With the Bible having been copied and translated so many times, isn't it likely that this process has led to errors?

Let's take a few moments to consider how we have arrived at the Bible we have.

### **Have we played "GOSSIP" to get the Bible?**

#### **Quantity of Manuscripts**

The Christian Bible is arranged into Old and New Testaments, with the Old being the part of the Bible written BEFORE Jesus lived; the New was written AFTER Jesus lived.

We possess many very ancient documents from both the Old and New Testaments. But the manuscript evidence is quite different for the two testaments.

### *Old Testament*

Beginning in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD, Jewish scribes called Masoretes copied and distributed the books of the Old Testament. Christians and Jews alike consider the Masoretic Text the standard text of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Today we **cannot** point to thousands and thousands of copies of the Hebrew Old Testament from the time of the Masoretes - and this is due to their practice of destroying copies that were damaged or worn! In fact, because of their reverence for the Bible, when a new copy was made (Remember, this was copying by hand!) the old copy was destroyed.

We can, however, point to thousands and thousands of very ancient copies of the New Testament documents.

### *New Testament*

As compared with any other writings from antiquity, we have in our possession an unparalleled number of manuscripts of the New Testament books and letters.

There are some five thousand ancient Greek manuscripts (dating from the second to the fourth century) and eight thousand Latin manuscripts from the early Christian centuries.<sup>9</sup> And there are tens of thousands of citations of the New Testament in the writings of early Christian leaders we refer to as church fathers.

So the quantity of manuscript evidence is excellent. So is the quality.

## **Quality of Manuscripts**

### *Old Testament*

As I just mentioned, the Masoretes began their work of copying the Old Testament in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD.

But the earliest Masoretic manuscript of the Old Testament we have is dated at 895 AD. At least that was the oldest manuscript we had - until 1947.

In that year, an amazing discovery was made in the mountainous area surrounding the Dead Sea. A Bedouin youth chunking rocks into a cave heard pottery shatter when he threw one rock into one cave (he probably thought he was in big trouble...).

Contained within pottery jars and preserved over the centuries were what has become known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. These are copies of Old Testament books that predate the Masoretes by as much as one thousand years!

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls dating from as early as 200 BC, drastically reduced the time span from the writing of the Old Testament books to our earliest copies of them.

And what is amazing is that when you compare the Masoretic texts with the Dead Sea Scrolls, there is scarcely any difference. Over a thousand years of copying and the text has remained intact.

The careful copying of the Old Testament from the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Masoretes helps us be able to say that the Old Testament text before us very nearly identical to what was originally written.

We can have similar confidence in the quality of the manuscript evidence for the New Testament.

### *New Testament*

But this is not because of the accuracy of copying over hundreds and thousands of years. This is because of the antiquity of the manuscripts we do have. We have fragments of the New Testament manuscripts dating from as early as AD 117,<sup>10</sup> only about two generations after Jesus' death!

---

<sup>10</sup> Papyrus fragments of the Gospel of John date to as early as AD 117. Since it is likely that John was the last Gospel written, this fragment may well be from within a generation of John's actual writing.

---

<sup>9</sup> A manuscript could be part or all of a certain New Testament book of letter.

That is amazing when compared against the manuscript evidence for just about any other ancient writings.

One example commonly given is that of Caesar's Gallic Wars. Julius Caesar lived in the century before Jesus lived and wrote of the Gallic military campaign around 50 BC. The earliest copy of the Gallic War we have dates from about 900 AD (roughly 950 years after he wrote) and we only have a total of ten copies.

Nobody doubts the accuracy of Caesar's writings. And yet the manuscript evidence of the New Testament is thousands of times better. If we are going to doubt the transmission of the New Testament writings, then we have to basically throw out all of what we think we know about ancient history.<sup>11</sup>

We have excellent evidence for each book of the New Testament dating from no later than AD 200, and much of it far earlier than that.

*Note: About the science of textual criticism...*

The objection is sometimes made, "*You don't have the original documents.*" To which I say, "Absolutely TRUE!" In fact, I'll go you one better. We probably don't have the second and in most cases even the third generation of the original documents!

However, what we do have are THOUSANDS and THOUSANDS of very old copies. And the science of textual criticism<sup>12</sup> takes these thousands of copies and compares them with each other, taking into consideration such factors as age, geography, the language into which the copy was translated and the known reliability of the copy to work BACK to what the original said.

---

<sup>11</sup> There is similarly weak ancient manuscript evidence for the writings of Herodotus, Euripedes, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Livy, and Tacitus. Source, I'm Glad You Asked, p. 93; Kenneth Boa and Larry Moody.

<sup>12</sup> This is a methodology employed when researching any kind of ancient document, religious or otherwise.

When it comes to the New Testament, in most cases there is no question as to what the original was because of the remarkable consistency of the copies.

Am I saying that there are NO questions of transmission? No, I'm not. But scholars estimate that we can have confidence in the upper 90 percent range about the accuracy of transmission from Paul to 2009.

**Summary:** You and I can be assured that when we sit down to read a Psalm or a historical book of the Old or New Testament or a Gospel or an epistle that it is *essentially* what was written by David, Samuel, Luke, or Paul.

If that addresses the question of transmission, other questions are still out there.

Just because we have a faithful version of the originals doesn't mean that we have a true and reliable Bible. The Bible could be exactly what the writers wrote and still be chalk full of errors and contradictions.

So, is what we have in the Bible reliable history or simply a nice collection of legends?

There are three strands of evidence I would submit when examining the reliability of the biblical writings. The first is the evidence gained from archaeology. I'LL give you a few "fer instances."

### **Nice Collection of Legends?**

#### **Evidence from Archaeology**

##### *Hittites*

For many years skeptics considered the Bible to be a collection of legends because of its repeated references to a race of people called "the Hittites."<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> These references occur mostly in the books of Moses - Genesis through Deuteronomy.

Nobody had ever heard of the Hittites outside of the Bible. It was assumed by some that the biblical writers had simply made up the Hittites. There was no evidence that they had even existed - until 1906.

That is when archaeologists (led by the German Hugo Winckler) discovered as many as 10,000 tablets describing a great empire that stretched from Asia Minor to Syria. This empire, known today as the Hittite Empire, is recognized as one of the great empires of the ancient world,

### *Laws of Hammurabi*

Then, some people used to think that it was impossible that Moses could have written the first five books of the Bible for the simple reason that writing had not been invented at that time. (1500 BC)

But archaeologists discovered the Code of Hammurabi, a law code written by a Babylonian king who predated Moses by nearly three hundred years. The Code of Hammurabi is a detailed set of ordinances that governed Babylon and which used a very precise written language.

And over the last century and a half lots of other archaeological excavations have corroborated the biblical record.

### *Various excavations confirm Old and New Testament history*

- Ras Shamra tablets (found in Ugarit) help us understand Hebrew prose and poetry and Canaanite culture.
- Ebla tablets confirm the accuracy of Genesis.
- The Moabite Stone yields information about the reign of Omri, king of Israel which agrees with the Bible.
- In 1842, archaeologists discovered evidence of Nineveh. Prior to this there were no hints of Nineveh's existence, giving rise to skepticism about the main themes of Jonah's and Nahum's prophecies as well as much of the Old Testament's references to Nineveh.
- The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III depicts how King Jehu of Israel had to submit to the Assyrian King.
- The Taylor Prism has an Assyrian text which describes Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem when Hezekiah was King.
- The Lachish letters refer to Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Judah and illustrate the life and times of Jeremiah the prophet.

- Archaeology undergirds and confirms the reports of life in the exilic and post-exilic days.
- Archaeology supports a sixth century date for the writing of Daniel.
- Secular history and archaeology supports Daniel's statement that Belshazzar was King at the time of Daniel 5.
- Luke's veracity as an historian has been validated over and over again by archaeology.

Nelson Gleuck, a former president of the Jewish Theological Seminary in the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and one of the foremost archaeologists of the twentieth century said this: "*In all of my archaeological investigation I have never found one artifact of antiquity that contradicts any statement of the Word of God.*"

In addition to archaeology, there is the strand of evidence from history itself that testifies to the reliability of the biblical record.

This is mainly a consideration with respect to the New Testament. But since there is so much controversy surrounding the reliability of the New Testament these days, I think it is well worth mentioning.

### **Evidence from History**

#### *The charge: New Testament is fiction*

Many people believe that the Gospels were written so long after Jesus lived and died that the accounts can't be trusted. The idea is that the stories of Jesus are highly embellished, if not wholly imaginary.<sup>14</sup>

Does this charge have a basis in fact? Did the idea of Jesus' claims to be the Son of God arise long after He died? Did the stories of His miracles begin to circulate so as to prop up the idea that He was really, really special?

---

<sup>14</sup> In the 1980's a highly publicized group of scholars put together "The Jesus Seminar." They have concluded that no more than 20% of Jesus' sayings and actions recorded in the Bible are historical. Obviously, I beg to differ...

What would someone like me say in response to this accusation that the New Testament is not an accurate picture of what actually happened in and around the time that Jesus lived?

I would first point to the cold, hard facts of chronology.

*The response: Chronology*

First of all, by referencing secular events we can fix with near certainty the date of Jesus' death. He died in AD 33.<sup>15</sup>

There is very good reason to believe that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark,<sup>16</sup> and Luke were all written, at most, 40-60 years after Jesus' death.<sup>17</sup> John may have written his Gospel a bit later, perhaps nearer the end of the first century, but still within 50-60 years of Jesus' death.<sup>18</sup>

Then, we know that Paul wrote everything he wrote within a generation of Jesus' death because he himself died in AD 67 (or 68).<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> We know, for instance, when Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Palestine, was in power. There is other extra-biblical evidence of Jesus' life and times. Josephus (first century) mentions Him. A letter by an imprisoned Syrian, Mara Bar-Serapion, dated A.D. 73 references the deaths of Socrates, Pythagoras and Jesus in one sentence. The historians Tacitus and Seutonius, the Roman governor Pliny the Younger and the Greek satirist Lucian mention Jesus, as does the Jewish Talmud.

<sup>16</sup> See Mark 15:21 for Mark's claim that the man who carried Jesus' cross was "*the father of Alexander and Rufus*" - certainly Mark included this detail so that his readers could vouch for the accuracy of what he was saying by talking with Alexander and Rufus, sons of Simon of Cyrene.

<sup>17</sup> There is actually reason to believe that they were written within 20-40 years after His death. But even most Bible critics will agree to the 40-60 year possibility.

<sup>18</sup> Adam Gopnik (writing in *The New Yorker*) says that the *Gnostic gospels* (Gospels written mainly in the second and third centuries) were so late on the scene that they "...no more challenge the basis of the Church's faith than the discovery of a document from the nineteenth century written in Ohio and defending King George would be a challenge to the basis of American democracy." Most famous of the Gnostic Gospels is *The Gospel of Thomas*, written no earlier than AD 175.

<sup>19</sup> Paul wanted his readers to know that there were plenty of eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection, 500 of them, in fact (1 Cor. 15). *Philippians*, written no later than twenty years after Jesus' death, finds Christians worshipping Jesus as God.

The author of Luke and Acts, the good doctor Luke, claimed to have received his accounts from eyewitnesses who were still alive.<sup>20</sup>

So, all of the biblical accounts of Jesus' life, teachings, miracles, death and resurrection were circulating within the lifetimes of hundreds who had been present at the events of His ministry.

If the reports of His miracles or teaching or resurrection were "made up" people still alive at the time would have stood up and said, "*That didn't happen!*"

But, despite the fact that many people did not become Christians, nobody rose up in the first several decades of Christendom to deny what the New Testament authors said about Jesus.

To answer the charge that the New Testament is fiction, I'd also bring in the strand of reason.

If Christians wrote books of fiction to persuade non-Christians to embrace their faith, why would they have included some of the content they included?

*The response: The weight of reason*

- Why record Jesus praying to get out of His mission in Gethsemane and why have Him crying out from the cross that God abandoned Him?
- Why not invent a saying of Jesus about the issue of circumcision, a hot topic in the early church?
- Why present Jesus as having been crucified, for this was a huge stumbling-block to both Jews and Romans in the early days? (Jews thinking that it proved Jesus to be under the curse of God; Romans believing that crucifixion proved Him to be a traitor)
- Why tell us that the first witnesses to His resurrection were women? Not that, from our perspective, this is a bad thing at all. But in the first century women were not considered reliable witnesses.
- Why constantly depict the apostles as petty, jealous, slow-witted and - in the end - cowards who either passively or actively failed Jesus?

---

<sup>20</sup> Acts 26:26 - These events (the events of Jesus' life) had not been done in a corner.

The content of the New Testament argues against fabrication!

*The response: Literature*

And then, to the charge that the New Testament Gospels are “fiction” pieces, we have as brilliant a scholar as C.S. Lewis arguing against it.<sup>21</sup>

Lewis tells us that the kind of fiction that you and I enjoy reading today is a relatively recent invention of the last three hundred years or so, and was unknown in Jesus’ day.<sup>22</sup>

However, works like the Gospels and Acts are completely consistent with first century historical accounts.

### **Summary:**

Speaking of fiction, one of the more well-known recent converts to Christianity is Anne Rice, a world-renowned novelist who wrote mostly in the horror-erotica genre (Interview with the Vampire and others like it).

Rice was an atheist who converted to Christianity relatively recently, primarily because she was astounded at the weakness of skeptics’ arguments against the reliability of the Bible!

Bottom line? There simply was not enough time elapsed for myths about Jesus to have been created and propagated. We have good cause to have great confidence in the reliability of the Bible.

Well, I hope we’ve come to the point of being able to say that the Bibles we can buy in bookstores today are faithful records of the sixty six books *as written* by the biblical authors. I think we can also say that the Bible is a reliable historical document.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Lewis’ expertise centered on literary analysis.

<sup>22</sup> Lewis, quoted in Keller’s The Reason for God, p. 107.

<sup>23</sup> Note, too, the beneficial effects of the Bible on cultures where it has had influence. It has shaped the course of history, thought, and culture. It has influenced philosophy, morality, law, politics, art, music, literature, education beyond estimation. It tends to standardize the language into which it is written

But Christians claim that the Bible is more - far more - than that. So is there evidence that the Bible is something more than a reliable piece of history? That it is God’s Word?

Consider the Bible as a literary work.

### **More Than a Book?**

#### **One Remarkable Book!**

*Authorship*

The sixty six books that make up the Bible were written by forty some-odd authors.

These would include Moses, Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah, David, Asaph, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter and Jude.

These men came from every walk of life. Among them are kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, and farmers.

*Places of composition*

Portions of the Bible were written on three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. And portions of the Bible were written under all kinds of conditions.

Some wrote in peacetime, some wrote during war, some wrote in prosperity, some wrote out of poverty. They wrote when they were happy, sad, angry, in the palace and in the prison.

---

(Luther’s Die Heilige Schrift, King James). And you simply can’t read great Western literature without an understanding of and appreciation for the Bible.

### *Literary form*

All kinds of literary forms are represented in the Bible, too. There is narrative history, poetry, biography, drama, exposition, letters, parables, prophecies, sermons, stories, and wisdom literature.

### *Time span*

The earliest biblical writing was probably the book of Job. It is believed that Job lived around 2,000 BC (a near contemporary to Abraham) so his would be the first book. The last book written in the Bible was John's Revelation, penned near the end of the first century. So, from beginning to end, there is a time span of roughly 2100 years.

### *Preservation*

The Bible has withstood centuries of criticism and persecution and portions of the Bible now exist in nearly 2,000 languages.

### *Themes addressed*

And, finally, the Bible addresses numerous weighty themes. It talks about God, the nature of humanity, sin, creation, judgment, Heaven, Hell, demons, angels, nature, salvation, and the future.

### **Summary:**

And do you know what is absolutely remarkable? It is that the Bible speaks with one voice on these many controversial subjects.

The Bible is a unity out of diversity. It is a harmonious and continuous message from beginning to end, a self-consistent whole the main theme of which is the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Given the consistency of its message, it is reasonable to assume that there was a divine Author behind the scenes working through the human writers.

And there is more.

### **A VERY Interesting Book...**

#### *Fulfilled prophecy*

If the nature of the Bible as a consistent literary masterpiece argues for God's role in its production, even more does the fulfillment of so many of its prophecies argue for inspiration.

I'm not talking about vague and general Nostradamus-like predictions that can be tied to any situation as convenient.

I'm talking about specifics like Nahum's prediction that the city of Nineveh would be destroyed by fire and flood. In 612 BC, Nineveh was destroyed by fire and flood.

The city straddled the Tigris River and its walls were broken down by a sudden spring flood on the Tigris. The Babylonian army, joined by the Persians, who had been waiting patiently outside the seemingly impregnable walls, rush in, ransacked, and then burned the city.

I'm talking about specifics like Ezekiel's prophecy (chapter 26) that the city of Tyre would be destroyed and thrown into the sea.

Now Tyre was one of the great cities in the world in the days of Ezekiel, but it was destroyed. The inhabitants of the city moved out to an island just off shore and re-established Tyre.

Then, in 332 BC (nearly two centuries later after Ezekiel), Alexander the Great brought his army to Tyre, built a causeway with the stones that had built the city of Tyre to allow his army to get to the island and totally obliterated all evidence of Tyre - an exact fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy.

I'm talking about the dozens of prophecies that speak to the coming of the long-anticipated Messiah of Israel that were all fulfilled in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Predictions as specific as the miracle of His conception (conceived of a virgin), the place of His birth (Bethlehem), the course of His ministry (heal the sick; give sight to the blind; release to the captives), the character

of His arrest (led as a lamb to the slaughter; silent as a sheep before its shearers), the manner of His death (pierced through), and the site of His burial (a rich man's tomb).<sup>24</sup>

And many other biblical prophecies have been fulfilled, speaking to the divine Author behind the human writers.

And then there are the claims of the Bible itself to be more than a book.

#### *Claims from within*

Psalm 119 claims blessing for those who absorb and live by its teachings. (so does Proverbs 2:1-5)

In 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Paul declares, ***[16] all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; [17] that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.***

The author of the book of Hebrews writes, ***[4:12] 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.***

And the apostle Peter tells us, ***[2 Peter 1:20-21] But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, [21] for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.***

#### **Conclusion:**

Why does all of this matter? Why does it matter what we think of the Bible? Simply this: The content of the Christian faith is found within the pages of the Bible. If it is NOT reliable, then the faith is invalid.

What do YOU think of the Bible?

Have you investigated its truth claims? Have you ever read it seriously? Seeing how much is at stake, won't you be willing to investigate the audacious claims of the Bible for yourself?

---

<sup>24</sup> Many of these prophecies are from Isaiah 53. See also Psalm 22, Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6.