

**The Bible, It's More than Mere Words on a Page**  
**2 Peter 1:16-21**

Dear Friends in Christ,

Can you trust the Bible? The Discovery Channel says “no.” In its popular “Mysteries of the Bible Explained” series, the narrator proposes how the plagues and flood account could all be explained by natural phenomena, and how many of Jesus miracles could have been sleight of hand. Popular talk show hosts such as Bill Maher and others say “no.” Maher is quoted as saying, “*To most Christians, the Bible is like a software license. Nobody actually reads it. They just scroll to the bottom and click ‘I agree.’*” The higher academic community says “no.” Students in world religion classes and sociology classes are continually told that the Bible is filled with contradictions and voices that oppose each other. They say that much of its message should be confined to the culture of its day. Science teachers tell them that the Genesis account of creation doesn’t agree with the evidence we’ve discovered.

Let’s face it, Christians face a constant barrage of challenges to the Bible and its accuracy relevance. And make no mistake, it can shake a Christian to the core. After all, if the Bible is discredited, what’s left? If we can’t trust the Bible when it comes to creation, how can we trust what it says about forgiveness? If the miracles reported in the Bible are merely sleight of hand or exaggeration, what about the greatest miracle reported in the Bible – Jesus’ resurrection? If some, or all of the Bible is fiction, well then why are we here, how did we get here, and where will we go when we die? So, can we trust the Bible? Or is it just mere words on a page? Well, it just so happens that as the Apostle Peter encountered similar questions 2000 years ago. The words before us this morning are his answer. We read in 2 Peter 2:16-21:

**<sup>16</sup> We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup> For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” <sup>18</sup> We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.**

**<sup>19</sup> And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

As the Apostle Peter wrote this letter, he was nearing his last days on this earth. This last letter reads much like a farewell letter. It is filled with thanksgiving, encouragement, and warning. One of the encouragements Peter gave was for the people to trust the words which God had given through the prophets and the apostles. So ask yourself, why did Peter need to make a statement like this? It’s because there were people claiming that the apostles’ words were myths and cleverly stories spoken to get a point across, but not factually true.

Peter says: **<sup>16</sup> We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.** Notice he doesn’t just deny that his words were made up stories, he contrasts that with what his words are: Eye-witness accounts. Then he sites perhaps the most amazing thing that he and any of the disciples had witnessed: Jesus transfiguration. **<sup>17</sup> For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” <sup>18</sup> We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.** We still look to eyewitnesses for proof today don’t we? Hair fibers, alibis, fingerprints, DNA, they are all valuable and can help us piece together how the crime might have played out. But if multiple people saw it and their testimony agrees, the case is closed. What Peter, James, and John saw on that mountain left no doubt in their minds as to who Jesus was. They heard God speaking, they saw God’s glory. They walked with Old Testament figures Moses and Elijah. All of this proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that this was the Son of God. That’s why they wrote it down. That’s why they were willing to suffer anything, even death, to share the message of Jesus with others. These words that they penned weren’t making them rich, they were making them targets! Yet they continued to share them because they knew the words were accurate. They had received them from God just as that the words which the prophets before them had written down were also from God: And their own experience reminded and reinforced what they already knew to be true, that the words of the Old Testament Prophets were also from God. **<sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

Yes, it is true that the words of the Bible are written down by people, but they are inspired by God himself so that what is on the page is completely true without any mistakes. This is the primary reason that the Bible is more than mere words on a page. It’s authors – both God who inspired it and the human writers who put pen to paper – are reliable. Now of course this is not accepted by the world at large. The inspiration of the Bible is constantly challenged – most often by those who claim that it is not accurate. After all, if it isn’t accurate, then it can’t be from God, right? The attacks on the

Bible's accuracy have been going on for thousands of years! Every generation has claimed that it isn't accurate. And don't think that the attacks on the Bible come only from outside of the church. Today the Bible is often undermined by those claiming to Christian leaders in churches, schools, and seminaries. And let's not think that you and I are always innocent of this attack. To change or marginalize the Bible can be appealing, can't it? If I don't like to hear what God says about marriage, or money, or forgiving, that little voice inside likes to have a way out. It's very convenient to say, "Well maybe that's not the part of the Bible that's from God. Maybe those are just Peter's words, maybe those are just Paul's words, I can just ignore that part. It's just a little part!" But what happens when we accept that any one portion of the Bible is inaccurate? We then have to question the whole thing.

Don't be fooled. The Bible has withstood thousands of years of these criticisms and billions still trust its promises, while during that same period of time, countless philosophies, scientific theories, and interpretations of history have gone by the wayside. The Bible will remain standing as the sole source of absolute truth precisely because it is God's Word and therefore it is accurate. The account of creation in Genesis: accurate. The account of the Israelites exodus from Egypt: accurate. The account of David and Goliath: accurate. The accounts of the prophets and the miracles God did during their days: accurate. The genealogies and records of kings and rulers found throughout the Bible's pages: accurate. The accounts of Jesus' birth and ministry, his death, and resurrection: accurate. The Bible is more than mere words on a page! Accuracy is another thing that makes the Bible more than mere words on a page.

But accuracy isn't everything is it? Suppose someone gave you a legal document that said Fred Jones owned a piece of property in Canada. Unless you're Fred Jones, it means nothing to you. It may be accurate, but it isn't relevant. So how about the Bible? I'm sure you've heard it said that the Bible just isn't relevant today. Peter couldn't disagree more. He could have continued by spending hours showcasing the accuracy of Old Testament prophecy. He could have pointed to Isaiah prophesying the coming of Cyrus 200 years before it happened, or calling Cyrus by name. He could point to the prophecies of Israel's release from captivity in Egypt and show how it was fulfilled hundreds of years later. Instead he says this: **you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.** He's not bragging about the accuracy of the Bible's promises – he's trying to help us appreciate the content of its promises, its relevance. The Bible is comforting and inspiring not only because it's accurate, but because it's accurate words impact us in a meaningful way. This too makes the Bible more than mere words on a page. Not only could Peter point out that the coming of Jesus was the fulfillment of a string of prophecies starting way back in the book of Genesis and continuing throughout the books of the Bible. He is able to share a message from that same book that brings real comfort and inspiration to people living today. To all of us who struggle with the reality of death, the Bible shares the certainty of life after death. Consider how Peter's eyewitness account of the Transfiguration supports this. As Peter and the apostles with him saw Jesus in his heavenly glory – who else did they see? Moses and Elijah – alive long after their days on earth were over. This made them completely confident that his promise of heaven could be trusted and they shared it with us so that we could be certain of life after death too. To all who are struggling with questions of whether they will go to a good place or a bad place when they die, to those who are terrified when they think of how their words or actions have hurt someone else – who wrestle with the guilt of secret sins – the Bible shares the certainty that Jesus bore the guilt and paid the penalty for all of our sins – every one! Think of that passage from 1 John, **"The blood of Jesus His Son, purifies us from every sin!"**

OK Perhaps we can see how the Bible contains a message that is helpful when I grow old, or I'm near death, but what about today? How often haven't you heard it said or implied that the Bible's promises and message is simply out of date – unable to help us in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world? Is the Bible irrelevant? Hardly. Open the pages of the Bible and you find people with cares and concerns and problems and joys just like ours. You'll find people navigating relationships, parenting, dealing with illness, enjoying victories and good times. The Bible is pertinent to every day of our lives until that time when Jesus returns or God takes us home. That's why Peter tells us that our Bibles are like a light in a dark place. The words of this book give us strength when we are tempted to use our mouths to slander or misuse God's name because everyone else is doing it. These words encourage us when we are dangerously near to drifting away from the promises God has to offer. These words give meaningful instruction explaining just why it is that we are here, and just how we can fulfill our life purpose – to give God glory and lead others to Him. This book, which so easily gathers dust, which is so easily taken for granted, it is special! It's more than mere words on a page. The author is reliable, the words accurate, and the content is relevant. The words in this book truly are a light shining in a dark place. So, how long since you opened your Bible? Maybe it's time. AMEN.