

## Can I Trust The Bible?

**September 7, 2014**

How many times have you received a text on your phone with the phrase, “God is not Dead”? The God Is Not Dead movie is the fictional story of a college student debating his philosophy professor over the existence of God. The end of the movie challenges you to text your friends the phrase “God is not dead” when you leave the movie.

While atheistic philosophers debate the existence of God on college campuses, an even more pressing debate on college campuses today concerns the Bible. College professors tell our children the Bible is a random collection of disconnected stories about God and that we can’t trust it.

Even on Christian college campuses this debate rages. Some Christian college professors tell their students that only parts of the Bible are relevant today. They tell our children the Bible has mistakes and contradictions and that the biblical writers occasionally heard God wrong. Christian college professors publish books claiming actual words of the Bible are not inspired by God, just the general concepts. They tell their students that the biblical writers occasionally inserted their own ideas instead of God’s.

On many Christian college campuses, the Bible is considered a good book but certainly not the authoritative infallible Word of God. What do you think? Pick up your Bible. What do you hold in your hand? How you answer that question is one of the most important decisions of your life.

This morning, we are asking the Bible what it has to say about itself. Does it claim to be the infallible word of God? What does the Bible say about itself?

That is the question 1 Peter 1:10-12 answers. Let's read it together.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. 1 Peter 1:10–12 (ESV)

### **What does the Old Testament say about itself?**

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. 1 Peter 1:10–11 (ESV)

### **The Old Testament considers itself the flawless words of God.**

Peter began by talking about our *salvation*. God has a plan to save us from our sins. It was all about sending his son. The whole Bible is a Marvel Comic movie, like Captain America or Spider-Man. We are hopelessly defeated against our powerful enemies called Satan, sin and death. Sin drags people into deeper, darker and grosser levels of wickedness, like ISIS and the beheading of Americans. We cannot save ourselves. Like a good Marvel comic movie, we need a superhero that is similar to us but more powerful than us, who can ride to the rescue and save the day because we can't save ourselves.

The superhero that conquers Satan, sin and death is God's own son, Jesus. This is the salvation the prophets of old anticipated. This is the grace we don't deserve that they were trying to understand.

It says *the prophets prophesied* about this. Who are the prophets? The prophets were men raised up by God to be his spokesman in their generation. Many of them preached God's Word. Many of them wrote God's Word. Some did both. What makes the Bible unique is that upwards of 25 percent of it was prophetic when written. This means the Bible was all about the future and what God would do in the future. This makes the Bible unique among all religious books. The Quran, the Bhagavad Gita and the Book of Mormon are not filled with prophecy. It just isn't there. Since the Bible is filled with prophecy, there is huge opportunity for it to be wrong, but amazingly, the Bible hasn't been proven wrong. It has only proven right again and again. This is what sets the Bible apart from all other religious books.

Biblical prophecy is revelation not speculation. Speculation is guessing at the future. Revelation is God telling people how the future will unfold because he knows it and controls it. Only God holds the future. This is why the Old Testament prophets said more than 3,800 times a version of, "Thus saith the Lord." The prophets were speaking for God. They were very aware of it.

How could the Old Testament prophets speak about the future with accuracy? Peter said "the Spirit of Christ was upon them." That is the Holy Spirit. Just as the Holy Spirit was upon Jesus and it was Jesus' complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit in his humanity that enabled him to live a perfect life, the same Holy Spirit was upon the prophets of old and he enabled them to prophecy perfectly. *As Jesus lived perfectly, they prophesied perfectly. Peter was saying the only perfect thing we have on the planet today is the Bible.*

This is what we believe at CrossWinds. We believe the words of the Bible are flawless and without error in their original writings. We believe that if God couldn't communicate what he wanted to communicate to us without error, then he isn't God.

Theologically this is called **Verbal Plenary Inspiration**.

- **Verbal** means we believe all the words of the Bible, not just the concepts, are inspired by God. They are without error.
- **Plenary** means all of the Bible is inspired, not just parts of it. Many people criticize this. We stand by this because that is what the Bible says about itself. We will learn more about this in a moment. God doesn't stutter. God doesn't mumble. God doesn't make mistakes when he speaks.
- **Inspiration** means it is inspired — that is written — by God.

### **The Old Testament is about Jesus.**

Peter said the spirit of Christ wasn't simply inspiring the prophets to speak prophecies about their immediate future. The Holy Spirit inspired the prophets about the coming of Christ in the distant future. The Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to prophecy details of his suffering, resurrection and subsequent glories.

If we look at the Old Testament, we should see Jesus woven into its fabric because Peter said the entire Bible is about Jesus. The Holy Spirit inspired the Old Testament prophets to say exactly what God wanted foretold about Jesus.

Let me show you some of the ways Jesus shows up in the Old Testament.

**Jesus shows up in direct prophecy.**

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)

We read this one at Christmas. Isaiah was writing 700 years before Christ. He told us about the arrival of the great hero of the Bible. This is how you can recognize him. Look for a pregnant virgin. That is a clue. This doesn't happen every Wednesday. This pregnant virgin will have a son. His name was to be Immanuel, which means "God with us." A virgin who gives birth to a baby boy who is called "God with us" is a sign you should be looking for. That sounds like it would be hard to fake. This was prophecy about Jesus 700 years before he came.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Micah 5:2 (ESV)

Here is another contemporary of Isaiah, writing 700 years before Christ. This savior, the hero of the Bible, was to be born in Bethlehem. This was a small dumpy rural town where everybody married a cousin because nobody else lived there. That was where the hero of the world was to be born. Even though he was a newborn baby, his was not new. His origins were from eternity past. Literally this says his origins were from eternity because *he never had a beginning*. That is a sign to look for. The hero that saves us from Satan, sin and death was to come from the dumpy rural town of Bethlehem but he was God because he always existed. This was prophecy written 700 years before Jesus arrived!

"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the

covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.”  
Malachi 3:1 (ESV)

Malachi was also writing hundreds of years before Jesus. He said there was to be a messenger who would prepare the way for the hero of the Bible before he arrived on the scene. We know this messenger was John the Baptist. When the hero came, he would suddenly come into the temple.

What makes it interesting is this prophecy could not be fulfilled today. There is no temple. The temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. and the Dome of the Rock built over it by Muslims a few hundred years later. For this prophecy to be fulfilled, it needed to transpire before 70 A.D. because you need a temple for the hero to come into. The hero needed to come before 70 A.D. and Jesus fit the bill.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert... Isaiah 35:5–6 (ESV)

When the hero came, you would know he arrived because he would be busy healing people. Blind people would see. Deaf people would hear. Lame people would walk. Mute people would sing. You would know the hero when he arrived because he would push back the curse of sin on this earth that ruins peoples lives. Is anybody seeing Jesus in this? The reason Jesus did so many miracles of healing is because that was the sign that God in the flesh, the hero of the Bible story, had arrived on the world scene. The Holy Spirit inspired Isaiah to write this 700 years before Jesus came!

Then I said to them, “If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.” And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. Then the Lord

said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord, to the potter. Zechariah 11:12–13 (ESV)

The hero of this story would eventually be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver and the money, when it is received, would be thrown into the temple. There are a couple things that are interesting. Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, just like the Holy Spirit inspired Zechariah to tell us, not 29 or 31... 30! It was very specific. It was pieces of silver, not gold, not dollars, not pesos, not Visa, not MasterCard or American Express. It was silver. When it was received, it was to be thrown into the temple, which is exactly what Judas did. It also meant it needed to transpire before 70 A.D. because the temple was gone after 70 A.D. Do you see how the Holy Spirit was guiding the prophets to lace prophecy about Christ throughout the Old Testament?

For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet... Psalm 22:16 (ESV)

What was talked about in this Psalm was the death of Jesus. This Psalm spoke of Jesus dying by crucifixion. The problem is crucifixion wasn't invented until hundreds of years after this Psalm was written. Do you see how the Holy Spirit wove this prophecy about Jesus into the Old Testament? The Old Testament prophets were saying exactly what the Holy Spirit wanted them to say and they were trying to put the pieces together, but like a jigsaw puzzle with missing pieces, they could only put together part of the picture.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his

grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Isaiah 53:7–9 (ESV)

We could spend a lot of time on these verses. Isaiah 52-53 is line by line of detailed prophecy about the life and death of Jesus. Just like it says, Jesus suffered his crucifixion and death in silence. Just like it says, he made his grave with the wicked. Christ died between two thieves. He was with a rich man in his death. Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man that was a secret disciple of Jesus, gave his tomb for Jesus, just as the Holy Spirit foretold through Isaiah 700 years before it happened. We could go on for a long time. Line after line of Christ's life is prophesied in the Old Testament because the prophets were not speaking by speculation; they spoke by revelation *exactly what the Holy Spirit wanted them to say without error.*

### **Jesus shows up as the Angel of the Lord.**

In addition to direct prophecy about Christ, Jesus showed up multiple times in the Old Testament in cameo appearances. He was the angel that walked with Abraham. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush. He was with Shadrack, Meshack and Abednago in the fiery furnace

. A few years ago we did a study on “the angel of the Lord” in the Old Testament. This angel is described as having all the qualities of God. In the Old Testament, he was described in a very similar way to Jesus in the New Testament. The Angel of the Lord was Jesus showing up in the Old Testament. A few years ago I gave a detailed message on this called, “Where was Christ



before the manger?” I included a link to that message in your notes if you want to learn more about this.<sup>1</sup> In the interest of time, we need to keep moving.

**Jesus shows up in the Old Testament in figures and events that are types of Christ.**

- The priesthood, which enabled God’s people to relate to God, prefigured Christ, our great high priest. He is the ultimate priest who enables a much better relationship with God than any earthly priest ever could.
- David, and other Old Testament kings, prefigured Jesus, the once-for-all great king of all kings who will rule God’s people forever.
- Moses, the great prophet who spoke for God prefigured Jesus the greatest prophet of all who spoke for God.
- Animal sacrifices prefigured the once-for-all perfect sacrifice of Jesus for all our sins.
- The temple, which represented God’s presence among his people prefigured Jesus who is the ultimate expression of God dwelling among his people forever.
- Unlike the first Adam who failed his test in a garden, Jesus, the second Adam, passed his test in a garden.
- When Isaac carried his own wood and laid his life down to be sacrificed according to the will of his father, he prefigured Jesus who would carry his own wood and lay his life down to be sacrificed according to the will of his father.
- Joseph served at the right hand of the ruler of the world and he used his power to forgive his brothers who betrayed him and he saved their lives. Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.christ2culture.com/resources/Books/00---The-Angels-of-Christmas---Digital-Commentary.pdf>

served at the right hand of the ruler of the world and used his power to extend forgiveness, and he saved the brothers and sisters who betrayed him.

- Just as Moses inaugurated a covenant between God and man, Jesus is the greater Moses who inaugurated a new and improved covenant between God and man.
- Just as Job suffered at the hands of the devil so God might be glorified while Job's dumb friends were of no help, Jesus suffered at the hands of the devil so God might be glorified while his friends were no help.
- Jesus was the greater Jonah who spent three days in the grave instead of three days in the belly of a fish to save a multitude much greater than the vast city of Ninevah.
- Jesus is the greater Hosea who married an unfaithful wife that he continued to pursue and love even when she was constantly unfaithful to him. That is the heart Jesus has for us, his unfaithful bride — the church. He continues to pursue and love us even when we are unfaithful to him.

Peter's right. The entire Old Testament is not speculation. Every bit of it is revelation inspired by the Holy Spirit so the Old Testament prophets said exactly what God wanted them to say, and much of it was about Jesus.

### **How did Jesus view the Old Testament?**

Rather than creating our own view of the Old Testament, if we can trust Jesus to save our souls when we die, we should be able to trust Jesus' opinion of the Old Testament. Let's see how Jesus viewed his Old Testament.

**Jesus viewed the Old Testament as the flawless words of God.**

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” Matthew 5:17–18 (ESV)

Jesus claimed that he fulfilled everything in the Old Testament. He claimed not an iota or a dot will pass away until every detail in the Old Testament is accomplished. Jesus literally said not the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet or the smallest vowel mark in the Hebrew alphabet, which is only a dot, will pass away until all of it is accomplished. *Jesus claimed the actual letters and vowels of each biblical word were accurately written by the Holy Spirit of God and all of the Bible is important.*

‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” Matthew 22:32 (ESV)

In context, Jesus was arguing with the religious leaders about the existence of life after death. Jesus argued for the existence of life after death based on the present tense of a Hebrew verb because Jesus believes the actual words of the Old Testament are the Words of God. Just like the letters and vowels are exactly what God wanted to say, so are the tenses. It is “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” not “I was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” That is how Jesus argued for the existence of life after death!

**Jesus viewed the Old Testament as all about him.**

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me... John 5:39 (ESV)

In context, Jesus was arguing with the religious leaders of the day and telling them they didn’t know their Bibles. These religious leaders were big brains. They didn’t just learned their AWANA verses, they memorized large

portions of the Old Testament in Hebrew — at least the first five books! We have a hard reading the Bible in English. They memorized it in Hebrew. Jesus told them if they would look in their Old Testaments, they would see Jesus all over the place. Jesus said the entire Old Testament is all about him! We just did a brief fly over a few minutes ago to show you that. The entire book is about Jesus, not just the New Testament. Unfortunately, even though these religious leaders memorized huge portions of the Bible, they missed the main point of the Bible.

And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Luke 24:25–27 (ESV)

After Jesus rose from the dead, he walked along the Emmaus road with some disciples. They were confused and perplexed about Jesus’ death and resurrection. Jesus began explaining to them everything from the Old Testament to show them God spoke about this in the Old Testament hundreds of years before. Nothing was out of control. This is exactly the way God planned it to happen.

**Application: Don’t look at the Bible the wrong way.**

There are two ways to look at the Bible. Some people view the Bible as a bunch of good principles and stories. The idea is to act like the good people. Don’t act like the bad people. Find the heroes of the story and act like them. Don’t act like the villains. That is called moralizing. That isn’t what the Bible is about. The Bible says every single one of us is a villain. Every single person in

the Bible, except one, deserves death. Since everyone is a villain, we all die and deserve hell. The only one who is not a villain is Jesus. We killed him.

Don't look at the Bible the wrong way, thinking it is a bunch of cute stories with nice Hallmark principles. The Bible is about us and our sin, and there is one hero that the entire book points to who rides to the rescue like a Marvel Comic hero — his name is Jesus.

### **What does the New Testament say about itself?**

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. 1 Peter 1:12 (ESV)

Now we move from the Old Testament prophets to the New Testament apostles and the things that were announced to you by those who preached to you the good news to you.

Just as the prophets were God's chosen spokesmn in the Old Testament, the apostles were God's chosen spokesman in the New Testament. Just as the prophets of the Old Testament were inspired by God to speak exactly what God wanted spoken, the New Testament apostles were also inspired by God to speak what God wanted spoken, plus they were eyewitnesses of Jesus.

It is hugely important to remember the New Testament was based on the eyewitness accounts of the apostles. If anybody knew what happened with Jesus, they were the ones. They were the eyewitnesses. Professors, philosophers and teachers coming 2,000 years later do not have better comprehension about Jesus than the eyewitnesses who lived with him for three years. Some books in the Bible, like Luke, were not written by an apostle but

they were authenticated by an apostle. For instance, Luke traveled with the apostle Paul who authenticated and endorsed his Gospel.

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. 2 Peter 1:16–18 (ESV)

Peter said the apostles and writers of the New Testament didn't make stuff up. They were eyewitnesses to the miracles, to Christ's death, Christ's beatings and his resurrection. Jesus is alive. By the way, Peter said he was there on the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus met with Moses and Elijah and revealed some of his glory. Peter heard God the Father say Jesus was his son. Note to self, when God speaks, we should listen. When God says Jesus is the one who is the hero, the savior of the world, go with it.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness... 2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

This means *all of the Bible* is literally the breath of God. The entire Bible is God speaking. It is literally God's words. While the Bible was written by men, it was also written by God because God's Holy Spirit used the writers' personalities, experiences and backgrounds and then inspired them, that means carried them along like wind in the sail of a boat, to say *exactly* what the Holy Spirit wanted them to say so we would have a *perfect record* of what God wanted us to know.

...knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV)

Here we have the same message. Peter said nobody made the Bible up. A guy wasn't smoking weed in a cave and came up with an idea of a pregnant virgin giving birth to God so everybody would get a holiday with presents. Nobody made up the fact that everybody is a sinner going to hell apart from Jesus and our simple trust in him. If you are making something up, you make something up that everybody likes.

Peter said no part of the Bible is speculation. It is all revelation from God via the Holy Spirit carrying the prophets and the apostles along so they said *exactly* what the Holy Spirit wanted them to say. If the Bible wasn't exactly what God wanted spoken, why would there be so many detailed prophecies, Christophanies and biblical types of Christ that are accurate with razor sharp precision? If the Bible wasn't accurate, why would Jesus argue for its accuracy down to letters, vowels and tenses of verbs?

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 2 Peter 3:15–16 (ESV)

Some people say that while the Old Testament is the Word of God, the New Testament shouldn't be. They claim it is was only hundreds of years later that men gathered at councils and declared Peter's letters, Paul's letters and other parts of the New Testament to be part of the Bible. If Peter, Paul and others knew their writings were added to the Bible and considered authoritative Scripture, they would be mortified.

Look what Peter said. Paul's letters were circulating. Paul's letters were considered by many to be authoritative Scripture but not everyone agreed on this. People were asking Peter, the head of the apostles, the leader of the early church, what they should do with Paul's writings. Should they listen to them?

What did Peter say about this? Peter called Paul's writings Scripture. Peter considered them on the same level of authority as the Old Testament Scriptures. *Paul's letters were considered authoritative Scripture from the very beginning. This means Peter considered them to be infallible and inspired by the Spirit of God just like the rest of the Old Testament.*

The Bible has a very high view of itself. The church councils eventually did publish lists of the books that were accepted as the Word of God. They didn't create the New Testament, they only stated what was already recognized by the people of God as the New Testament Scriptures.

**Application: Don't put yourself over the Bible. Put yourself under it.**

There are two ways to look at the Bible. Many people put themselves over the Bible. They stand as judge and jury over it. They choose parts they believe are wrong and don't apply to their lives. If something makes them uncomfortable, they cross it out. That part about homosexuality was just cultural, we can ignore it. That part about love your neighbor, that doesn't apply to me because my neighbor is hard to get along with.

If they don't understand something, they assume the Bible is wrong rather than assume the Bible is right and they have to grow in their understanding of it. That is arrogance. That is pride, but that is the default position of most people



when it comes to the Bible. Don't assume you have all knowledge and can correct or reinterpret God's Word and that the writers of the Bible were a bunch of idiots. Assume you have to learn, grow and understand. Accept what the Bible has to say about itself in both the Old and New Testaments. It is the very words of God and it is all about Jesus from beginning to end.

Let me give you an example from the Evangelical Lutheran Church. They hold this position:

We sometimes conclude either that the writer's culture or personal experience (e.g., subordination of women or keeping of slaves) seems to have prompted his missing what God was saying or doing, or that God now is saying or doing something new.<sup>2</sup>

That is unbiblical. At CrossWinds, we believe the opposite. We put ourselves under the Bible. It has authority over us. We believe the Bible is what it claims to be, the very infallible words of God. If we don't understand something, we study it and submit to it. *We assume the Bible is right, not assume the Bible is wrong.* We want to submit to the Bible and let it rebuke us, correct us and show us more about Jesus.

## Conclusion

The movie God is Not Dead made the case that atheism doesn't make sense. For many people today, it is not God that is on trial, it is his Word. Believe what the Bible says about itself. It can be trusted. It is the very words of God to us down to the letters, vowels and tenses of the verbs being exactly what God the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to say. We can trust it. The God Is Not Dead movie closed with people texting "God is not dead" to their friends and

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/New-or-Returning-to-Church/Dig-Deeper/The-Bible.aspx>

neighbors. If we were doing a similar ending, what would you text your friends as a summary phrase of what we learned today?

I think we would text something like this. “The Bible can be trusted and it is all about Jesus.” That is what it claims to be, the infallible Word of God that is all about Jesus from beginning to end.



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