

Believe It:  
*The Holy Bible*

As you've already heard this morning, we had quite an amazing trip to the Middle East. I know I echo the sentiments of everyone else on the trip when I say that your prayers were felt repeatedly and constantly. There might have been 7 hours difference in time zones but we knew there was someone praying for us at every moment. And I believe there were many doors of opportunity opened for us because of those prayers.

One of the unique opportunities we had was to have a group of Muslim scholars sit down with us and give us a first hand lesson on Islam. We told them what the average American knows about Islam is what they hear on the news so this is your chance to set the record straight. Come and fill us in on the real deal.

They met with the whole group and then a couple of us had the chance to meet 2 more times with them. When we met as a group there was a question and answer time at the end and some of our people asked some excellent questions. I think they quickly realized this was a well-versed group they were dealing with.

But that time with the whole group was supposed to be more of an instruction time than a debate time so we didn't get into all the details on Islamic vs Christian teaching.

The 2 other times were different. Especially the first time. One of the younger men, Hadi, came with his books about the Bible so he could challenge us on all the supposed contradictions in the Bible.

That was interesting to me. There was no discussion on the Koran. It was all about the Bible, which was fine with me because that kept the discussion in my territory. But their goal was to ask us hard questions about the Bible, which we then would stumble over, and they could say, "See, you didn't even know there were problems in the Bible."

The basic tenets of their belief system were this: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David, Jesus, and a bunch of other biblical characters were prophets of God. They all spoke truth but the record of what they said has become corrupted over the centuries. The last great prophet was Muhammad. His teachings are found in the Koran, which of course is completely reliable.

Muhammad didn't come to found a new religion he just came to give God's final and complete revelation and to explain those who came before him.

Jesus was a great prophet but He never claimed to be God, was not the Son of God or the Savior of mankind, and never died on a cross.

As we talked, it quickly became evident that the real issue at hand was the reliability of the Bible. Their assumption was that it had been translated from one language to another, multiple times. That it had been changed through the centuries. And that where it agreed with the Koran it was true but where it disagreed it was false.

I was absolutely amazed at their appalling lack of understanding of how the Bible came into being, manuscript evidence, principles of biblical interpretation, and the whole concept of the incarnation of Jesus Christ and why we need a Savior.

Before we left for the trip, I was thinking through the next series I wanted to work through on Sunday mornings. What I had decided on was a series we're calling *Believe It*. Not *Believe it or not*, as if the Bible was something out of a Ripley's museum, but just *Believe It*.

What I want us to dig into is: What do we as Christians believe? Why do we as Christians believe what we believe? And what difference does it make to our everyday lives?

What we're going to do over the coming weeks is use FCC's statement of faith as our guide. We want to go through it step by step with a goal in mind. When we're finished we want every person who's part of this congregation to be able to explain what they believe and why they believe it.

We don't want to scare you away here but our goal is to literally produce a group of well equipped theologians. And just so "theology" doesn't cause you to have a panic attack and run out the door, remember "theology" simply means "the study of God." *Theos* means "God", *ology* means "the study of," so theology is just learning about God. That's our goal in the coming weeks. We want to learn about God.

Now interestingly, coming on the heels of a Muslim misunderstanding about the Bible, the first point in our Statement of Faith is The Holy Scriptures. Here's how that first point reads:

***The Holy Scriptures.*** *The Bible in its original documents is the inspired Word of God, the written record of His supernatural revelation of Himself to man, absolute in its authority, complete in its revelation, final in its content, and without error in its statements.*

That's a pretty bold, isn't it? We wanted to make sure that people know exactly where

we're coming from. We live in a day and age in which people can say two things are true when they contradict each other. I have people say to me, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died for our sins." Then they say, "But of course sincere people of other religions will be forgiven even if they don't trust Christ as Savior."

That's called a gross inconsistency. If Jesus is the Savior then you can't be saved without Him. You can't have it both ways and be consistent.

So what is it about the Bible that would make us have the kind of confidence that says it's absolute, complete, final, and without error? Isn't that a bit presumptuous?

Well there are substantive reasons why we believe the Bible. You should know them.

### *I. We Believe The Bible Is The Word Of God Because Of It's Claims*

#### **Turn to II Timothy 3 Page 1068**

If you've been around here a while and you keep hearing these verses being read, there's a good reason. They are absolutely vital to the Bible's claims about itself.

#### **Read 16-17**

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the New Testament in Greek. The word "inspiration" here is a translation of the Greek term *theopneustos*. That's a compound word made up of *theos* meaning "God" and *pneuma* (pneumatic) which means "breath" or "wind."

Interestingly I didn't need to explain that when I preached in the Arabic church because the Arabic translation literally says "God breathed."

Now that's very different from the way we often use the word "inspiration." Our word "expiration" means to breath out. Literally *theopneustos* means "God breathed." It doesn't refer to the authors being inspired it means what they wrote was God breathed. It was God's Word.

God breathed out His words through human authors and so those words have His life.

We could go on to give a hundred more examples. Four hundred thirteen times the Old Testament authors use the phrase "Thus says the Lord" to preface what they wrote.

In passages like Mark 7 Jesus called the Law of Moses "The Word of God." Not the words of a prophet or a great leader, but "The Word of God."

The Bible's very specific in its claims about itself.

Now I know the Bible's claims about itself aren't proof, but I believe it's a claim we shouldn't take lightly.

There are lots of other religious books that are revered as Scripture that never make that claim. The Koran says, "(This is) the revelation of the Book in which there is no doubt, from the Lord of the Worlds." (32:2).

The Islamic claim is that God dictated the Koran word for word by the angel Gabriel to Mohammed over a period of 23 years. Since Mohammed couldn't read or write he dictated it to his followers who wrote it down.

*I. We Believe The Bible Is The Word Of God Because Of It's Claims*

*II. We Believe The Bible Is The Word Of God Because Of It's Uniqueness*

We say it's supernatural in its revelation.

Think about this; the Bible is really a library of 66 different books, written by 40 plus authors over a period of 1500 years. The authors came from all walks of life.

There were fishermen, shepherds, kings, a physician, even a tax collector and a soldier. The list goes on. All of these authors wrote over a period of 15 centuries and we bind their writings together in one cohesive book we call The Book. The word "Bible" means book.

The Bible is a compilation of writings that never contradicts itself and has a theme that flows from Genesis through Revelation.

By the way, when people say to me that they don't believe the Bible because of all the contradictions I always ask, "Which ones are you referring too?"

Some people give a verse or two out of context but most are silent. They're just repeating something they heard but never investigated.

My Islamic friend Hadi quoted Luke 9:27 in which Jesus said, *I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.* He said, that's an obvious contradiction.

First of all, if someone was writing the Bible hundreds of years after the events they wouldn't have been so stupid as to include something so unmistakably false. I mean, get real.

Here's a principle of Biblical interpretation that will answer 90% of your questions. This is

a deep truth so write this one down. Are you ready?

Here it is: Read the next verse! The most important rule in understanding the Bible, or any book for that matter is, read the context!

*About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." (Luke 9:28, 29, 35)*

Here's Peter's comment, *We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. 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." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. (II Peter 1:16-19)*

It wasn't a contradiction at all. It was a beautiful preview of Christ in His kingdom glory.

The Bible is a book that can be understood in it's basics by a child, but at the same time you could read it for a lifetime and never stop learning the depths of it's truths.

Every week for 33 years we've gotten together at Faith Community Church to study the Bible. We sing about its truths, hear sermons from its pages and study it in classes and on our own. I've preached hundreds of sermons from the Bible and people keep coming back for more.

That's amazing! Could you imagine us doing that with FIFTY SHADES OF GREY, FIFTY SHADES DARKER, FIFTY SHADES FREED? All 3 of E. L. James' foul, wicked trilogy books have been # 1, 2, & 3 on the NY Times best seller list for 17 weeks now.

Could you imagine the sermon series?

If there's a personal, thinking, rational, God who created us in His image He would want to communicate with us. A book is the perfect way. Without words there is no thought and without a book there would be no way for God to communicate His thoughts to all people at all points in history.

The Bible claims to be, and is filled with evidence, that it is that book.

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*II. We Believe The Bible Is The Word Of God Because Of It's Uniqueness*

*III. We Believe The Bible Is The Word Of God Because Of It's Accuracy*

For the Bible to really be God's Word it has to be true in all its aspects. Either we can believe all of it, or we can't believe any of it. If there are errors in the Bible in areas of history of science then how could we trust it in the even more important realms of salvation and eternity.

If the Bible is really from God it's going to be accurate 100% of the time.

Early in the 19th century a new science was born. We call it the science of archeology.

More than a century ago critics questioned almost every event and person you read about in the Bible. Today professors in university class rooms and even an occasional pastor still spouts off the rhetoric.

The thing is, the past century has been a gold mine of archeological discoveries. We now have the capacity to check out the events and people mentioned in the Bible.

Dr. F. W. Albright, Professor Emeritus of Johns Hopkins says, "There can be no doubt that archeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition."

Millar Burrows of Yale, in a book published by the American Schools of Oriental Research, writes, "On the whole, archeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record. More than one archeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine."

"The excessive skepticism of many liberal theologians stems not from a careful evaluation of the available data, but from an enormous predisposition against the supernatural."

Nelson Glueck, renowned Jewish archeologist wrote, "...it may be stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."

I'd like you to see just a couple of once presumed mythological references in the Bible.

## **Turn to Genesis 11 Page 10**

One of the most amazing things for me about our trip was to stand on a hillside and look down on the area that Abraham and Lot divided up.

**Read vs 31**

The critics had a field day with references like this. No one had ever heard of the city of Ur. They said it's a made-up place like most of the references in the Bible. That's like the Wizard of Oz!

In 1922 a British archeologist, Charles Leonard Wolley excavated the city of Ur. Abram wasn't some wandering Bedouin from the back side of the desert.

He lived in one of the most important commercial centers of the ancient world. Ur had a population of 300,000 (which was mega-city in that time in history) and covered 4 square miles.

Ur had two-story brick, whitewashed houses with indoor plumbing. And this was 4000 years ago! I can remember when my grandparents got indoor plumbing.

If you think that's dramatic, listen to this...

### **Turn to Genesis 15 Read verses 18-21**

The ancient Hittites are mentioned 40 times in 8 different chapters of the Old Testament but they weren't mentioned outside of the Bible. For critics that's proof enough that the Bible writers made it all up.

In 1906 a German archeological team went to Boghaz-koy in central Turkey and unearthed the Hittite capital of Hattusa. This is called "The Lions Gate" in the ruins of Hattusa.

They found 10,000 clay tablets and discovered that the Hittites were a major power in 1800 BC.

My favorite discovery of all is a king mentioned one time in the Bible. He's Sargon, king of Assyria.

One mention in the Bible and no mention outside the Bible, conclusion: Sargon must be another one of those Bible myths.

In 1843 a French archeologist excavated an area 12 miles north of the site of ancient Nineveh at Korsadad, Iraq.

What he found was the 25 acre palace of King Sargon. This is one of the 40 ton winged bulls from the palace. You can see it at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute Museum.

If you're looking for something more recent just Google "Recent Biblical Archeological

Discoveries” and read to your heart’s content.

Can we trust the historicity of the Bible? We can’t keep up with the amount of stuff that’s being unearthed and studied. Over and over again the Bible is shown to be accurate.

In the Koran, Pharaoh (the king of Egypt) orders Haman to begin making baked bricks for the purpose of building a "lofty tower" so that Pharaoh can "survey the god of Moses" and "deem him of the liars. (Haman also appears associated with Pharaoh in 4 other *Suwaras*). Haman was a *Persian* noble who lived a thousand years after Moses.

In the Koran, the Jews are said to have made the golden calf idol at the command of the Samaritans, a group of people who didn’t even exist until nearly ten centuries after the Exodus.

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*IV. We Believe The Bible Is The Word Of God Because Of It’s Prophecy*

In 2004 a blue-ribbon panel of psychics, prophets and visionaries was convened to make their predictions for the coming years.

They included these: there would be cures for just about every major disease, communications would be disrupted when Earth's magnetic field reverses, a California inventor would cause earthquakes in Los Angeles and San Francisco, NASA astronomers would find a ruined city on Mars.

The psychics never foresaw the September 11 terrorist attack, nor did any psychic issue a warning about the tsunami wave that killed over 150,000 in southern Asia the day after Christmas in 2004.

Gene Emory a writer for *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine says, "It's hard to think of two events that reverberated around the globe as much as those did, yet the psychics never picked up on them. It's just more evidence that people who claim to have psychic powers really don't."

Now let’s contrast those non-predictions with what we see in the Bible. Remember in all of these areas of uniqueness, history, prophecy, we’re just skimming the surface.

One of our Muslim friends had never heard of the prophecies in the Bible. We shared email addresses so that we could communicate further. He was an engineer and said, “I want to see proof.” I said we are fellow seekers of truth. I want proof too.



## **Turn to Deuteronomy 18 Page 176 Read vs. 20-22**

I don't know if you caught that or not, but God just laid out an iron clad guarantee. His prophets are always right. Not Most of the time. Not 99% of the time. One hundred percent of the time!

One quarter of the Bible is prophetic. Some of it is prophecy of things that will happen. But much of it is prophecy that was made in the past with the fulfillment in the past too. That means we can check the predictions out and apply the Bible's own test. The predictions have to be 100% accurate.

One of the most unique prophecies of all is found in the writings of the prophet Ezekiel regarding the ancient city of Tyre.

## **Turn to Ezekiel 26 Page 839**

### **Read vs 1-14, 21**

Several things are said about this city:

1. Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the city and smash it's walls
2. Many nations would come against Tyre
3. Tyre would be scraped flat like the top of a rock
4. The stones and timbers would be thrown into the sea
5. Fishermen would spread their nets there
6. Tyre would never be rebuilt

Tyre was a city on the northern coast of Palestine. It was inhabited by the Phoenicians, one of the strongest maritime powers of the day. Tyre was a crucial point of commerce and was well fortified. Its walls were over 100 feet high and 15 feet thick.

Three years after Ezekiel made this prediction Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon laid siege to the city. The siege lasted 13 years until 573 BC. When Nebuchadnezzar finally took the city the Phoenicians had moved everything of value to an island 1/2 mile off shore.

Babylon had no navy so they went home.

For 241 years the mainland of the original city remained just as Nebuchadnezzar had left it.

Then out of the West came a 24 year old general named Alexander. He had a massive

army, had just defeated the Persians, and was on his way to Egypt.

He commanded the people of Tyre to surrender. They told him to buzz off.

But Alexander wasn't a guy who took "no" for an answer.

He ordered his men to begin to haul the rubble from the old city and use it to build a causeway out to the island. To do this they even scraped up the soil to complete the land bridge.

In the end the island fortress of Tyre was captured.

Many nations came against Tyre. She was scraped flat like the top of a rock. Her stones and timbers were cast into the sea.

Secular historian, Philip Myers, writes, "The larger part of the site of the once great city is now bare...a place where fishermen that still frequent the spot spread their nets."

You can read about ancient Tyre on Lebanon's tourism web site.

*Isaiah 48:3-5 I have declared the former things from the beginning; They went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass. Because I knew that you were obstinate, And your neck was an iron sinew, And your brow bronze, even from the beginning I have declared it to you; Before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you.*

There are literally hundreds of prophecies in the Bible. There's over a hundred just about Jesus Christ. Hundreds of years before His birth the prophets foretold what family He'd be born into, what town He'd be born in, how He'd live His life, and how and when He'd die.

Can I really trust the Bible? Is the Bible the Word of God? Is it absolute in its authority, complete in its revelation, final in its content, and without error in its statements? I've found it to be trustworthy from beginning to end.

It tells me about God my Creator and his love for me.

It tells me about my own sinful heart. And it tells me that the only way to stand with confidence at the final judgment is to humbly believe the truth that God provided His Son to be my Savior.

Once again, our Muslim friends told us, "We don't want a savior. We don't need a savior. We will obey Allah's commands and that will suffice in the judgment,"

All I could say is, “My God won’t accept such feeble, imperfect works. He won’t be bought off. He’s perfect and only a perfect sacrifice will satisfy His justice and holiness.”

Before we left Hadi pulled me aside and asked me this question. I was stunned, but it brought tears to my eyes at the same time. He said, “Tell me, what does the Bible say will happen to me if I don’t believe in Jesus Christ as Savior?” He asked for references and I showed him. And I pray for Hadi, that he could know the freedom that comes through God our Savior.