

We Believe in God's Holy Word - The Bible 2 Peter 1:16-21

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Many people who call themselves Christians cannot quantify or define what it is they believe.

How do we know the way of Salvation? How do we know what it is that God requires of us? How are we to know the things of God?

To know these things and more, we must turn to the Bible, the very Word of God. But, why is the Bible the foundation for what we believe?

In the Baptist Faith and Message, where our Baptist beliefs are outlined, it starts not with what we believe to be true about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, not with what we believe about salvation and not with what we believe about heaven or hell.

The Baptist Faith and Message starts off with what we believe is true about Scripture, the Bible. This is significant, because everything we believe is based solely and entirely on the very words of God which is the Bible.

Let me read Article 1 from the Baptist Faith and Message: *"The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation."*

What we hold in our hands doesn't merely contain the words of God, it's all the Word of God, written by men, divinely inspired and directed by God.

Let me make this perfectly clear, we don't worship the Bible, we worship the Author of the Bible, and our salvation comes through Jesus Christ, Who's the focus of the Bible.

John 5:39, "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me."

As such, the Bible is the final, ultimate base of authority and truth which leads us to Jesus. Anything less than this is deficient and opens the door to every conceivable kind of theological distortion.

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A Gallup Poll released in July of this year, stated that only 20% of Americans believe the Bible is the actual Word of God to be taken literally. This is down from a high of 40% in 1984.

Looking deeper in those statistics, only 40% who identify as evangelical or born again believe the Bible to be the actual word of God to be taken literally.

Many Christian say they believe every word, yet they don't know what every word says because they haven't read the Scriptures.

Oh, they know some of the stories, but do they understand, from the Word, what holy living is?

Commenting on this poll, Family Research Council president, Tony Perkins, offered his hypothesis for why the majority of Americans are skewing away from a literal interpretation of the Bible.

“I think the reason we’re seeing this downward trend in terms of those who view Scripture as literal, literally the Word of God, is that cultural forces have really begun to press in on the church because of some of the things they’re having to rectify.”

He acknowledged that accepting the Bible literally comes at a counter-cultural, often personal cost.

Mr. Perkins continues, *“Either the word of God is true, and the choices that family members have made about their sexual lifestyle, their personal relationship in terms of holiness, what kind of church they’re in, and the doctrine that’s being taught, that if those things are true in the Scripture, then they’re out of line with it. So as these pressures come to bear, it’s easier just to reject those elements of Scripture and say it’s all fine.”*

Look what Peter had to say. 2 Peter 1:16, *“For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”*

That word “*stories*,” or tales/fables in other translations, in the Greek is “*mythos*.” The word where we get our word “*myth*.” Peter didn’t make up these things he’s teaching.

The central message of 2 Peter, found in chapter 3, is the certainty of Jesus coming again. Peter knows because Peter himself saw the glory and majesty of Jesus firsthand.

Peter spent most of his time warning about false teachers who misinterpret the scriptures and taught falsehood.

2 Peter 3:3–4, *“Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.*

They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

Peter's refuting the teaching, that there's no second coming or Jesus will delay His coming indefinitely.

This is where we're at today. The teachings of Jesus are being mocked and twisted to fit personal desires and agendas. This is why people reject the literal interpretation of the Word.

In verse 16, when Peter wrote, "*the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power,*" those two words, "coming and power" in the Greek is actually a two word combination.

It's like when we say we are "good and mad" in English meaning "very mad." Peter's telling about Jesus' powerful coming.

The word "power" in the Greek is "*dynamis*" from which we get our word dynamite. Jesus' coming will be powerful, but how does Peter know this? Peter, James, and John "*were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*"

This phrase "*eyewitnesses of His majesty*" found in 1 Peter 1:16 refers to the Transfiguration of Jesus we find in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9 which was a well-documented event.

Look what Jesus said the week before His transformation. Matthew 16:28, "*Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.*"

Jesus' transformation had more to do with His Second Coming than with His resurrection. Peter, James, and John saw Jesus in all his glory as Jesus will be seen when He comes again.

2 Peter 1:17–18, *“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.”*

Peter based the certainty on Jesus’ second coming on what he saw on the Mount of Transfiguration. Because of this, Peter had a three-part proof:

1. He saw it with his own eyes.
2. He heard the voice of God with His own ears.
3. It wasn’t a vision or a dream, he was physically present for the whole thing.

Jesus enabled Peter, James, and John to catch a glimpse of what His glory will look like when He returns.

It’s this glory of Jesus that we’ll behold in the Millennium to come. What an event to which Peter was a witness!

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2 Peter 1:19, *“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, 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.”*

All this confirmed what was written by the Prophets, referring to the whole of the Old Testament as we know it, or the Holy Scriptures, as it was known in Peter’s day.

There’s more prophecy in the Old Testament about Jesus’ second coming than about His first coming. You see to Peter, the Word came alive. Peter saw the Incarnate Word (that is Jesus) in His glory.

Peter heard the Word straight from God, then Peter realized that the written Word was with him all this time. It came straight from the Holy Spirit.

Peter even told them that *“you will do well to pay attention to it.”* We would do well to pay attention and heed all the words of this Book.

All of God’s revelation is before us in the Bible. Like the way we’re drawn to a light in a dark place. This world in which we live is a dark place, but we have the Light of Life in our hands.

Next, look at that phrase *“until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”* Jesus was referred to as the Bright and Morning Star in Revelation 22:16.

This phrase, *“until the day dawns,”* means that Jesus is coming. In the presence of Jesus, we’ll have no need of this Book because our knowledge will be complete.

But in the meanwhile, this Book, for which Peter says he has confirmed by His eyewitness account of Jesus’ transformation, is what we have for life and practice.

This written Word illuminates and Peter knew it. 2 Peter 1:20, *“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things.”*

That word *“interpretation”* can also be translated *“origin.”* The Word we have in our hands came from God.

All Scripture originated with God, not man. Let’s consider the Word’s origin first, then we will return to consider our own personal interpretation.

2 Peter 1:21, *“For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”* This is a key passage that the Bible says about itself.

God used man to write the Word, in the same way a writer uses a pen, or a musician uses a musical instrument. God’s the originator of all Scripture and men wrote as they were move by the Spirit of God.

Many versions of the Bible use the word “inspired,” i.e. 2 Timothy 3:16a, *“All Scripture is inspired by God.”*

All of the Bible is that way. We even say the Bible is inspired. The word *“inspired”* in the Greek means *“God breathed.”*

All of it, from Genesis to Revelation, was written as God breathed. The prophets wrote as God directed, many didn’t even understand the significance or meaning of their words.

Take Daniel for example, he didn’t understand the meaning of what he was writing but he wrote anyway.

Daniel 12:8–9, *“I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, “My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?” He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end.”*

Because it all came from God, it’s without any errors in all areas. We’d say the Bible is inerrant. In other words, there are no mistakes in the original manuscripts.

What we have in our hands is over 99% true to the original manuscripts. No other ancient document comes close to that claim.

Scholars call *The Illiad* accurate, yet it may only be 70% accurate, at best, to whatever its original texts were.

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Let's go back to verse 20. 2 Peter 1:20, *"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things."*

There are two parts to the Holy Scriptures, the writing of the Scriptures, which came straight from God, and the proper interpretation, which also must come from God.

The Scriptures are not what I want it to be. It's not a matter of one's *"own interpretation"* or private/individual interpretation. The Holy Spirit interprets the Scripture for us. Let me give several examples.

In the story of Joseph in Genesis, Pharaoh had a dream, but God, through Joseph, gave the proper interpretation.

In Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar had some dreams and God, through Daniel, gave the proper interpretation of those dreams. Daniel had visions and Daniel received interpretation of those dreams from an angel.

Throughout the Old Testament, dreams, visions, and prophecy were given proper interpretations by God.

So, it's no different today with the Word of God in our hands. We're not free to interpret the Word however we feel. It's not a simple matter of what the Word means to us.

Isaiah 55:11, *"So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."*

We're not free to interpret the way we want but only under direction of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:13–14, *“This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.”*

Doesn't it make sense that if we have the same Spirit, we'd have similar interpretations?

Also, if you know of someone who's not out for his own interest and you sense that individual is Spiritually attuned, wouldn't you want to hear what he or she had to say about the Word?

This book is meaningless and outdated and of no use without the Holy Spirit. Why do you think the world goes against the things of God? It's because they neither know God nor His Word.

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Conclusion

But we find so-call Spiritual people giving in to the things that tickle their ears.

2 Timothy 4:3–4, *“For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”*

People will rather believe the lie if it suits their purposes. We don't get to choose. God's Word stands whether or not I agree or disagree with it.

Jesus is coming again. Are you ready for His return? Have you conformed and believe in His Word. It's truly amazing that God has given us so much.

Yet one day He'll hold us accountable as to what we've done with His Word.

Hosea 4:6a, *"One day He will hold us accountable as to what we have done with it."*

How well do you know the Word of God?