

Series Slide

Today will be the last Nones & Dones message for a couple of months.

In this series we are taking a look Christianity from the perspective of people who aren't a part of an organized religion or from those who have been a part of a church- but no longer are. The aim is that we look at some things from a fresh perspective both positively- like Hope and Meaning- while we also seriously engage things that make it hard to believe- like debates about if Science jibes with the Bible...or is the Bible even a trustworthy source of authority?

If you happen to be one of our friends that is engaging in this series and coming from one of those spots- I want to be really clear on this- WE WOULD LOVE FOR YOU TO BE HERE EVEN when we aren't preaching on these subjects. We'll go back into our normal rhythm for the rest of the spring and summer of preaching a book of the Bible- in this case- we'll finish out the second half of Paul's letter to the Romans.

So- I hope that you'll come back- no matter what you believe and where you are in your journey.

Moment of Silence

In 2012, Steve Wells wrote a book called "The Skeptics Annotated Bible". Its a King James Version bible with notes included to point out all of the Bible's contradictions, absurdities, and injustices.

Rather than quote the author- I'd like to quote a portion of a 5 star Amazon review by user DHM

"People don't really read the Bible anymore - darn thing's too long, too boring, and too old-fashioned.

Better instead to go to church on Sunday and rock out with that edgy youth pastor, you know the one, the guy with the goatee and the ear piercing.

Because of this mindset, the modern day Christian isn't exposed to the hideous glory of The Bible.

So how much of the Bible do most people really know? At most, a few carefully chosen passages, repeated ad nauseam.

The vast majority of the weighty tome is wholly ignored, and only picked up to move it out of the way of the hymnals or other publications held in the church pew.

"This book remedies that; it encourages people to read the Bible - or causes them to bury their head even further in the sand. It is nothing less than the entirety of the King James Bible, annotated and cross referenced to point out all the illogical, immoral, and indefensible passages contained within its self-contradictory pages. And by doing so, it issues a challenge to the religious: "Have you actually *read* this thing? No? Maybe you should, then, considering you've decided to shape your life around it."- Amazon user DHM

That represents a pretty common viewpoint. In a nutshell- Anyone who actually reads the Bible will be so stunned by its abhorrent content and inconsistencies that there is no way a rational and loving human being could honor it as true and authoritative or representative of any kind of "Good God".

Title Slide- "Can I Really Trust the Bible?: How the Word of God is the Truth about Jesus for Us"- 2 Peter 2:16-21

The truth is- you can find LOTS of people who have read the Bible cover-to-cover multiple times who actually grow to love the God it reveals more and more deeply and who's lives are marked by deep compassion, sacrifice, and joy.

At City Church- we don't try to protect the Bible- or protect you from the Bible. We have always engaged the difficult passages of the Bible- in fact we've got one coming up next week in Romans 9.

I preached the entire way through Joshua a year or two ago- which has a ton of difficult passages in it...because I don't think there is a page of the Bible that does not reveal something about God or the condition of humans, and about hope for the world.

But it does take understanding some things about the Bible. if you read an ikea furniture manual thinking its a spy thriller- you are going to be disappointed. Or if you read a murder mystery thinking its a moral guide- you are going to have some issues with the authorities.

The thing about the Bible- is its not just one book- its a library of books and letters written over the span of thousands of years- different authors, different genres and written from and to different cultures and contexts.

And while you don't have to know everything about all of those cultures and contexts to understand it on a helpful and enlightening level- at some point- it WILL be helpful to you to have a better grasp on those ideas- especially when you read a passage that completely baffles you.

When I glanced through some of the problems pointed out by the Skeptics Bible- I wasn't alarmed or shocked. In fact- I already knew about those verses. But I also

noticed that the Skeptics Bible seemed to completely miss the faithful work of scholarship over the last 1500 or so years that actually show the Bible to be an extremely trustworthy document.

So just like the author of the Skeptics Bible would point at the Holy Bible and say- "Its your bias that allows you to believe all this stuff!"

I would say to the author of the Skeptics Bible about his Bible- "Its your bias that allows you to uncritically believe all that stuff"

So are we at a stale mate?

Today I want to dig into three ideas that work together to make one sentence about the Bible.

The Bible is True. Its truth about Jesus. and though not written to US...it is for US.
So The Bible is the truth about Jesus for Us.

So lets start with some Scripture- and don't worry- I'm not only going to use the Bible to prove the reliability of the bible- but we are going to start here...and end here.

2 Peter 1:16-21

16 For we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased! " 18 We ourselves heard this voice when it came from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. 19 We also have the prophetic word strongly confirmed, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you know this: No prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet's own interpretation, 21 because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit

Luke 1:1-4

Many have undertaken to compile a narrative about the events that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed them down to us. 3 So it also seemed good to me, since I have carefully investigated everything from the very first, to write to you in an orderly sequence, most honorable Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed.

Luke 24:44-48

44 He told them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you — that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. 46 He also said to them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day, 47 and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.

Hebrews 1:1-2

Long ago God spoke to the ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways.

2 In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe through him.

Transition:

Alright- Here's the statement we're working with.

The Bible is the truth about Jesus for all of us.

A very simple statement- one I hope you can remember. Where every word is a double click that opens up scads and scads of ideas- some of which I'll show you today. So lets break this sentence up into 3 parts.

1) The Bible is the truth...

The Bible is not a single book- its a collection of books, and letters, and poetry, and prophecies. Its more of a library of books bound together. Its written by 40 authors- divided into 39 OT books written in the Hebrew language. and 27 books of the NT written primarily in Greek.

The New Testament is made up of 4 separate biographical accounts of Jesus life, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection, called Gospels, 1 historical reporting on the start of the church by Luke called Acts, 13 letters from the apostle Paul to the early church, and 9 additional letters by James, Peter, Jude, and John, and one book whose author we are unsure of- thats the book of Hebrews- and then one book of Apocalyptic Prophecy called Revelation.

Together- these books over time were recognized as Scripture. The first time all these writings were put together and recognized as Holy Text- was in AD 170- with the exception of Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, and 3 John. In AD 363 all but Revelation was recognized, then in 393 and 397 at 2 separate councils- all 27 NT books were included and considered authoritative.

Now- that can sound like a bunch of people got together to pick and choose what made the Bible and what and what didn't make the Bible.

But that's not accurate.

The Bible formed over time. The councils that closed what's called the canon- canon just means Standard- weren't deciding what made Christianity look good- they were recognizing what had already circulated in the church as authoritative up to that point. The Bible came together very organically over many years. The a

Those councils- in order to put together the books that had borne out to be true - used the following criteria for deciding what was included in the NT. The OT is relatively undisputed in its source and origin, so I'm not going to spend anytime there.

But here is the

Criteria for the NT

- 1) **Apostolicity- written by someone who was with Jesus, or was with someone who was with Jesus.**
- 2) **Orthodoxy- doesn't contradict previously revealed truth**
- 3) **Antiquity- Its from the time of the apostles**
- 4) **Catholicity- its widely accepted as authoritative.**

You might say, "Well- if the Bible didn't completely come together until 350 years after Jesus- doesn't that mean the whole thing could be like a game of telephone? Where one person told somebody else something and it just kept getting passed along until a legend developed that was nothing like the actual truth?"

Well, even though the Bible wasn't completely put together until then- the dates of the original writings of all the NT books are relatively agreed upon. The 4 gospels were- at the VERY MOST- written down 40-60 years after Jesus' death. Paul's letters about 15-25 years after Jesus' death- which reference many of the events in Jesus' life including miracles, crucifixion and resurrection. Which means the biblical accounts of Jesus' life were circulating within the lifetimes of hundreds of people who had been present during the events of his ministry.

Luke 1:2-3 & 2 Peter 1:16

You can see both Luke (who spent time with the Apostle Paul and Peter) starts his gospel and subsequent book of Acts- apparently hired by Theophilus to put together a detailed and accurate account of exactly what happened with Jesus and the apostles.

You see the same thing from Peter who makes the point- along with Luke- that they gathered eyewitness accounts in order to write what they did. Which is exactly what

you do when you are attempting to write an accurate history. You go to the eyewitnesses and you see how their accounts of events jibe.

In fact- you get little nods to the eyewitnesses all through the NT.

Mark 15:21

The guy that helped Jesus carry his cross up the mountain- is “the father of Alexander and Rufus”. There is no reason for Mark to include these names unless the original readers had access to them. IOW, Mark is saying- Go ask these guys, they’ll tell you what happened.

Or in Luke 24- the two guys who walk with Jesus after his resurrection on the Road to Emmaus- one’s name is listed, Cleopas. Why? Because Luke is indicating- that is my source. Makes no sense to list one guy’s name and not the other- except that it’s a footnote to a source.

1 Cor 15:6

Paul does the same thing in 1 Cor 15 when he says over 500 people saw Jesus alive after his crucifixion- many of them still alive- go ask them!

This eliminates the possibility of a legend about Jesus being formed. that cannot be the explanation for his resurrection.

Back to 1)

But we don’t just get that from the dates of the original documents...it’s also the form of them.

The content of the gospels is not the way legends were written at that time. The things in them are too detailed and counter-productive to legend.

For example- the leader of the new religion dying a shameful death on a cross. Or the account of Jesus praying to get out of his mission in the Garden of Gethsemane. Or on the Cross when Jesus cries out to the Father Why have you forsaken me?

These would only have only offended driven away prospective converts. Why invent the story of women being the first witnesses to the resurrection when women’s testimony wasn’t even admissible in court?

Not to mention- the apostles- the leaders of the early movement- are depicted in the gospels as petty, jealous, slow-witted, and cowardly. Their failures- not their triumphs are highlighted.

The only seriously reasonable conclusion is that the events actually happened that way- not that later people put together a legend.

Now- you may also be wondering- well- how do we know the translation we hold in our hands is the same as the originals.

Well- because the Bible is far and away- the most reliably put together reproduced document of any ancient document we have.

TABLE

Book	# of Copies	Years between Original & Earliest Copies
Plato	7	1,300
Caesar, <i>Gallic Wars</i>	10	1,000
Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>	3	2,000
New Testament	5,800	<100

We have more manuscript evidence to support the Bible than any ten pieces of classical literature combined.

Which means- if you're skeptical about the Bible- you need to be skeptical about the accuracy of every other piece of ancient literature. In the provisions of God to protect the revelation of himself- think about this.

For someone to change the NT-

1. They would've had to find 5800 manuscripts or portions of manuscripts, change all of them to make them say the same thing, not show their ink work was different, get them back to where they stole them from, and not tell anyone what they did.
2. Not to mention that in the first few centuries the Bible was translated into Syriac, Coptic, and Latin. So they would've had to find all those translations to make them match.

Then we have the early church fathers who have this habit of writing about the NT, to the point that scholar Bruce Metzger says "If all we had of the NT was the quotations, citations, and commentaries from church fathers we could produce over 95% of the NT just from their writing."- which means you'd have to change all of those.

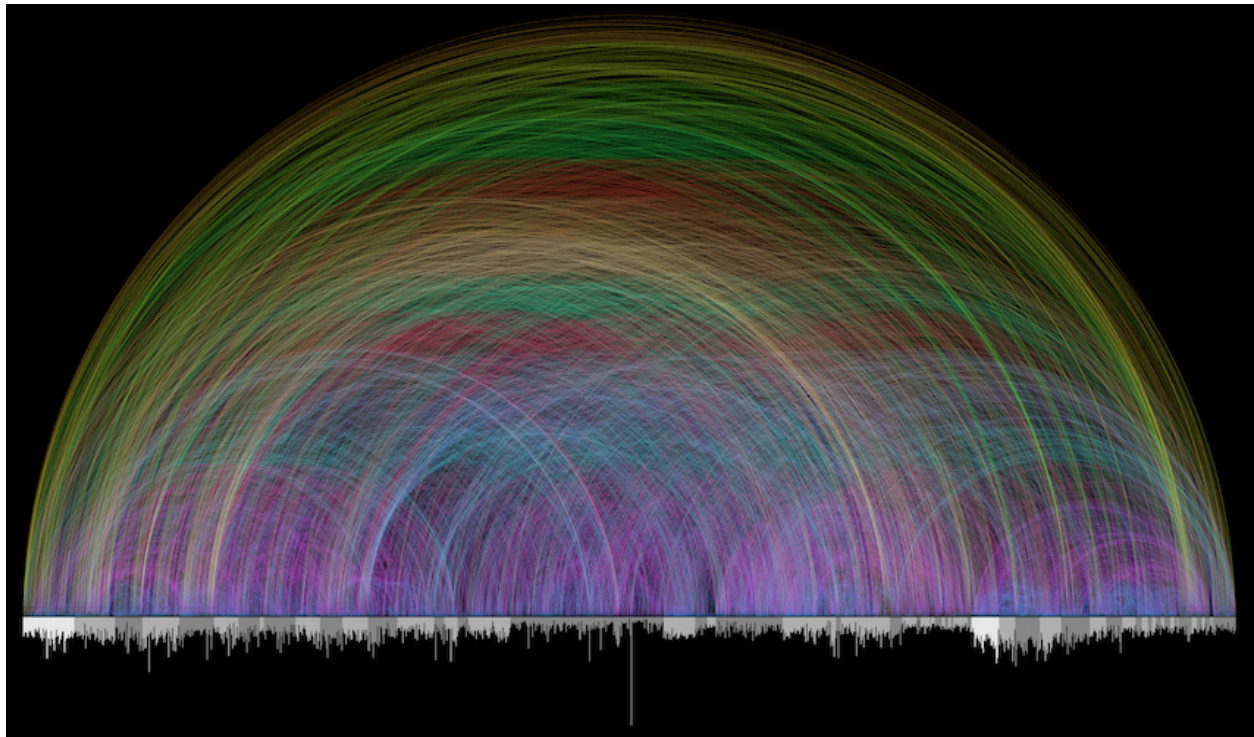
If you're thinking- boy wouldn't it be better to have one original document? The answer is no. If there was one original— all you have to do is doctor that- and boom- the bible is changed.

2 Peter 1:20-21

Peter makes the point here that the writing of the Scripture was not just men making stuff up. Rather- in a work of the Holy Spirit- like a father holding the hand of his child- men spoke FROM God as they were CARRIED ALONG by the Holy Spirit.

This is why we say that the Scriptures are “inspired”. Yes they are the work of humans- but they are also the divine voice of God speaking through them.

Let me show you a
picture.



These is a visual representation of the cross-references used in the Bible. in other words- OT & NT- when one references the other. Either an OT prophecy predicting something that happened in the NT, or a NT reference to something written in the OT. (BTW, if you say, I don't like the OT, I just like Jesus- you have a major problem, because Jesus affirmed the entirety of the OT and said he came to fulfill it.)

Chapters of the Bible represented along the bottom, the longer the line, the longer the chapter. You can say right dead center- is Psalm 119. It Nearly perfectly evenly divides this artful masterpiece- like a book mark. Know what Psalm 119 is about? Its a poem about The goodness and beauty of Gods word.

Additionally- speaking of prophecies. Unlike the Quran, book of Mormon, or the Hindu Veda- which all claim divine inspiration- the Bible contains predictive prophecies. Of those prophecies- hundreds have been fulfilled.

Just prophecies about Jesus being the Messiah- there's over 300 of them- and they are very specific- not like a fortune cookie or something.

Born in Bethlehem 700 years before Jesus is born.

Born of a virgin

His escape to Egypt

Riding a donkey into Jerusalem

Teaching in parables

Being betrayed for 30 pieces of silver

Dying by crucifixion, BTW prophesied 1000 years before Jesus was born- and written about in detail in Psalm 22 400 years before crucifixion was even invented.

Mathematician Peter Stoner says "The chance that any man could have fulfilled 8 prophecies is one in 10 to the 17th."

1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000

If you took silver dollars and laid them over the face of Texas, they would cover the whole state 2 feet deep. Then- you mark one of them, and blindfold him and slingshot him into the coins- that has the same chances as 8 prophecies coming true.

Jesus fulfilled over 300 specific OT prophecies.

Transition: Let's keep going.

2) The Bible is the truth about Jesus...

It's important to understand the purpose of the Bible is not to show you how the world was created. It's not to show you how to live a moral life. It's not to help make your life better with spiritual life hacks.

Although- to a degree- the Bible will give insight into all those things. The Bible is a revelation- a revealing. It is God showing us who he is- and he does that mostly by showing us Jesus- his son.

So the Bible is a unified story- taken from thousands of years and over 40 different authors- brought together in Jesus.

2 Peter 1:16, Hebrews 1:1-2

You can see both Peter and the author of Hebrews draw our attention there.

Peter says- this is all about us witnessing to you about who Jesus is.

Hebrews opens with- Jesus is the radiance of God's glory- and where God revealed himself through the prophets of the OT- they were all pointing to Jesus. Look to Jesus if you want to know the point of the Bible. Every thing leading up to him is pointing to his life, death, and resurrection...and everything after him is depending on his life, death and resurrection.

Even Jesus himself acknowledges this. Jesus tells these guys on the Road to Emmaus- as he's walking with them after his resurrection

Luke 24:25-27

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory? " 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.

The best way I know how to put this was given to us in this classic piece by the late great Doctor Timothy Keller.

From Tim Keller:

Jesus is the true and better Adam who passed the test in the garden and whose obedience is imputed to us.

Jesus is the true and better Abel who, though innocently slain, has blood now that cries out, not for our condemnation, but for acquittal.

Jesus is the true and better Abraham who answered the call of God to leave all the comfortable and familiar and go out into the void not knowing wither he went to create a new people of God.

Jesus is the true and better Isaac who was not just offered up by his father on the mount but was truly sacrificed for us. And when God said to Abraham, "Now I know you love me because you did not withhold your son, your only son whom you love from me," now we can look at God taking his son up the mountain and sacrificing him and say, "Now we know that you love us because you did not withhold your son, your only son, whom you love from us."

Jesus is the true and better Jacob who wrestled and took the blow of justice we deserved, so we, like Jacob, only receive the wounds of grace to wake us up and discipline us.

**Jesus is the true and better Joseph who, at the right hand of the king, forgives those who betrayed and sold him and uses his new power to save them.
Jesus is the true and better Moses who stands in the gap between the people and the Lord and who mediates a new covenant.**

Jesus is the true and better Rock of Moses who, struck with the rod of God's justice, now gives us water in the desert.

Jesus is the true and better Job, the truly innocent sufferer, who then intercedes for and saves his stupid friends.

Jesus is the true and better David whose victory becomes his people's victory, though they never lifted a stone to accomplish it themselves.

Jesus is the true and better Esther who didn't just risk leaving an earthly palace but lost the ultimate and heavenly one, who didn't just risk his life, but gave his life to save his people.

Jesus is the true and better Jonah who was cast out into the storm so that we could be brought in.

Jesus is the real Rock of Moses, the real Passover Lamb, innocent, perfect, helpless, slain so the angel of death will pass over us. He's the true temple, the true prophet, the true priest, the true king, the true sacrifice, the true lamb, the true light, the true bread.

The Bible's really not about you—it's about him.

Transition: Finally

3) The Bible is the truth about Jesus for all of us!

Even though the Bible is about Jesus- its still FOR all of us.

From the very first pages of the OT- all the way through to the book of Revelation- there is a clear message.

The Bible is not just for one group of people. In fact- and we'll talk about this later in the Nones and Dones series- Xianity is the most inclusive exclusivity that exists. Every belief system, every religion is exclusive. But Christianity is unique that it doesn't have an epi-center. It doesn't ask anyone to make pilgrimages to a holy site. In fact- what Jesus does is transform you into the very temple of the Holy Spirit.

The place of worship for Jesus is wherever a person who trusts him is.

Look what Jesus said when he opened the mind of his disciples to UNDERSTAND the Bible.

Luke 24:45-48

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. 46 He also said to them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day, 47 and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.

He boils down the understanding of the Scriptures to 2 things.

1- The Messiah- the Jewish messiah prophesied and predicted for centuries- is Jesus. and that Jesus will die a death he didn't deserve- rise from the dead on the 3rd day.

And because he died the death we should have died for our sin- we can now repent from our sin- believe Jesus- and receive forgiveness "IN HIS NAME". Meaning- we get what Jesus deserves- eternal life. As he takes what we deserve- death for our sin.

And he says that is available to ALL NATIONS. Yes- it started in Jerusalem- but its going world wide. Because of Jesus- there is no one- absolutely no one- who has to be cut off from God because of their sin.

Then secondly he says- And you are witnesses of these things.

I love that- because the way God reveals himself keeps going.

In the Bible- its the Holy Spirit carrying along humans as they speak for God.

And now- in the church- in every one of you who has received the Holy Spirit by following Jesus and trusting him- we now are carried along as witnesses- to what he has done for EVERYONE!

Do you trust Jesus- are you taking IHOP seriously?