Can We Trust the Bible? part 2

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang. Thank you for joining us.!

Back to you this evening. If you would take out your Bible, you can go ahead and open with me to Matthew 16. It'll be a bit before we get there, but you'll have it open when we need it. So tonight, we're continuing our series on Can We Trust the Bible? So this is part two. Admittedly, it's been a while since I did part one, so I don't even remember what I said fully.
It was like a month ago. Originally, these were right back to back, but life happens, so they're a month apart. So just a brief review of kind of what we talked about last time. I left off by saying that if the resurrection is true, if the resurrection actually happened, and I believe it did, then the Bible is God's Word.
And there are five undeniable facts that everyone must deal with, and there are these. That Jesus was a real historical person. Two, that Jesus publicly died on a Roman cross.
Three, Jesus' followers claimed that He was resurrected on the third day. Fourthly, that Jesus' disciples actually saw Him alive after He died.
[1:20] Even the Pharisees acknowledged this in Acts chapter 4. And fifthly, no one ever produced Jesus' dead body. So thinking about those five facts, those are undeniable facts that everyone has to deal with historically.

And based on what the Bible says, Andrew's thinking logically, the resurrection of Jesus is the best explanation of all five of those facts. And something else that we must consider when we think about the resurrection is the disciples were not expecting a resurrection.
A lot of critics will claim, you know, the resurrection was just a dream that the apostles had. It was just kind of wishful thinking that they sort of like spoke into existence in some vision that they had. But they were not expecting a resurrection. And you can actually see this quite clearly in the gospel accounts. Even after they heard that Jesus was resurrected, they were still slow to believe. Thomas was the slowest, but even the others weren't abundantly quick to receive that testimony. They were not expecting it. They didn't have a category for it. And so the only way then they arrived at the conclusion that Jesus had risen from the dead is because the things they experienced and the things they saw and the things they heard left them with no other explanation other than that Jesus rose from the dead.
[2:40] And so we have every reason to believe that what the disciples thought happened and what they said happened actually did happen. So we believe that the resurrection is a reality.

But if the resurrection took place, then our trust in the Bible is launched into an entirely different galaxy of confidence. This moves us far beyond saying the Bible is just historically reliable.
If the resurrection happens and we believe it, we must say the Bible is the Word of God. And throughout our study so far, we haven't assumed that. We just started off by saying let's approach the Bible as a historical document and consider it on its own terms.
And from our study, we've seen that it's incredibly reliable historically. But when we say we trust the Bible as Christians, when we say we believe the Bible, we are not merely saying it's a reliable historical document.
We are saying it is the Word of the living God. So how is it that we get there? How is it that we can say that the Word of God is inspired by the creator of the universe such that every single word is without error and completely true in everything it says?
[3:54] Why do we believe these things about the Bible? It's one thing to say the Bible is accurate. It's a bit more extreme to say it comes from God directly. So how is it that we can reasonably argue for that?

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Ultimately, because Jesus rose from the dead. Because he rose from the dead, we believe what he says. We listen to him when he speaks.
And what he has said is actually that the Bible is the Word of God. And so that's pretty much it. We believe the Bible. And so the New Testament documents are historically reliable.
The New Testament claims that Jesus rose from the dead. And so we listen to Jesus when he speaks. And Jesus says the Bible is God's Word. Jesus has conquered the grave.
He has conquered death. The only one in history to ever do that. So we ought to listen to him when he speaks. So what is it that he claimed? And so we'll look first at Jesus' claims.
[4:53] Jesus' claims. And what we see when we read through the Gospels is that Jesus predicted his own resurrection. That's an incredibly foolish claim to make if you can't back it up.

That is so easy to falsify if you can't back it up. You say you could rise from the dead. You died and you did not rise again. And so that's an outlandish claim. That goes ultimately even beyond saying he's the Son of God because you can't really prove or disprove that.
But we can test this. We can test a resurrection. We can test someone dying and coming back to life. And so this is a foolish claim if Jesus was telling a lie because it's so easy to falsify.
So in Matthew 16, you're already there, in verse 21. It says, And so Jesus here very clearly predicts his death and resurrection to his disciples.
And this comes right on the heels of Peter having confessed that Jesus is the Messiah. So if you look back up to chapter 16, verse 16, Jesus is asking them, Who do you say that I am?
[6:22] And Peter, speaking for the rest, says, You are the Christ. That is the Messiah. The Son of the living God. And from that point, Jesus showed that he, being the Messiah, must suffer many things and be killed and on the third day rise again.

And now, let's not read too quickly over verse 21, where it says that he showed them, or he began to show his disciples this. And how do you think he showed them?
Was he acting it out? Were they playing Pictionary? How did he show that these things were so?
He showed them from the Scriptures. He would have shown them from the Old Testament.
Peter would stand in front of him after he said this in verse 21 and say, No, you're not going to die. You're the Messiah. You're going to conquer our enemies.
You will not die. But Jesus is showing from the Old Testament that the Messiah will die. And you think of places like Isaiah 53, talking about him laying his life down and being beaten beyond recognition by human beings.
[7:35] But then later in Isaiah, saying he will prolong his days. You think of Hosea 6, where Israel is speaking, saying he has torn us down, he has shattered us, but on the third day we will be raised.

You think of several connections like this, where Jesus is showing them that it's necessary for the Messiah to suffer, die, and rise again. And ultimately what this is doing is Jesus is saying, If I don't die and rise again, then I am not the Messiah.
And actually this is what he does every time he predicts his death and resurrection. He ties his own title, his own identity to the death and resurrection in such a way that if it doesn't happen, if it doesn't take place, then he is not who he said he was.
He connected the resurrection to his identity as the Son of God. And it's kind of like what Orville Redenbacher used to do. I can't remember exactly what he said, it was a little bit before my time, but like, you'll like it better or I'm not Orville Redenbacher.
Something like that. And he called it popping corn. Instead of just popcorn. But anyway. So that's what Orville Redenbacher was doing. He was tying his identity, his name, to his product.
[8:57] And Jesus is saying, you know, I am the Son of God, and if I do not rise again, then my claims are false. I am not who I said I was.

And if you look over at Matthew 17, verses 22 and 23, he again predicts his death and resurrection, taking even more titles to his name.
It says, as they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, the Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.
And this title, Son of Man, was Jesus' favorite title for himself. And it actually comes from the Old Testament. It comes from Daniel 7, 13, where what we see is a divine person receiving glory from God the Father.
But we see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with great glory and being seated at the right hand of the Ancient of Days. And so when Jesus says the Son of Man, when he calls himself

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that, he is claiming deity.
[10:06] He is claiming to be the Son of God. And he is saying that the Son of Man will be delivered and will be raised. And so if those things do not take place, he is not the Son of Man like he claimed.

Again, he's tying the resurrection to his identity. And so what does this mean? Because he rose again, it means that he is the Son of Man. Because he rose again, it means he is the Son of God. He proves true the claims that he made about himself. And so we must listen to him. This is the man who rose from the dead. And yet he is no mere man.
He is also the Son of God. So since Jesus rose from the dead and proved himself to be God, we must align ourselves with him. Which even includes how we think.
We want to think his thoughts after him. We want to view the world around us in the same way that Jesus thought about the world. And what was of everlasting importance to Jesus?
[11:06] What was the singular thing that he propped up as being important for the believers? It was the Bible. And you think of things like Matthew 5.18 where he says, not an iota, not a dot of the law will pass away.

Heaven and earth will pass away. Heaven and earth will burn up, but God's word will remain forever. So what did Jesus think about the Bible? We've seen Jesus' claims. Now let's see Jesus' view of Scripture.
And you can turn with me to Matthew 19. And at this point in his life and ministry, the Pharisees are trying to lay traps for him, trying to catch him in his words so that they can get rid of him ultimately from the face of the earth.
But they find out very quickly they can't do it. But so verse 3 of chapter 19, this is one of those tests. It says, And as our pastors documented through Mark, this is kind of a heads-eye-win, tails-you-lose sort of question.
There's not really an easy right answer to give to this question because of the politics of the day. But Jesus, as always, answers masterfully. Verse 4, he answered, Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?
[12:34] And said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they're no longer two, but one flesh.

What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. Straightforward quotation from Genesis 2.24, but with one twist.
Look carefully at verse 4. He who created them, that is God, verse 5, said. And then he quotes Genesis 2.24.
If you read Genesis 2, verse 24, God is not the one speaking. Moses, the author, is writing this teaching as a response to God's creation.
And so in Jesus' mind, anytime the Bible speaks, God speaks. Even if God is not the direct speaker in that given passage, if the Bible is speaking, it is God's voice that is heard.
[13:37] And we actually see this throughout the entire Bible as well. Scripture and God are often used as synonyms. They're used interchangeably. So Romans 9 is an example.

You can write down Romans 9.17, where Paul says, the Scripture says to Pharaoh. And it quotes Exodus 9. But if you read Exodus 9, God is the one speaking directly to Pharaoh.
And so Scripture, whenever it speaks, God is speaking, even if he's not the one directly speaking in that narrative or in that moment. It was not the Bible that spoke to Pharaoh historically.
It was God. But when Scripture speaks, it's the exact same thing as God speaking. This was Jesus' view of the Bible. And he's the guy that rose from the dead.
So when it comes to the Old Testament, what do you think are the four most difficult stories to believe? So thinking about the four most challenging stories to believe, most common objections to stories in the Old Testament, I've got four written down.
[14:39] Admittedly, it's a subjective list. But the four stories that I hear most about being denied or rejected or people struggling to believe would be, one, Adam and Eve, thinking that there are two, you know, actual historical people that were first in line that were created by God.

So the story of Adam and Eve. Secondly, it would be Noah and the flood. Do we really believe God flooded the entire earth? Thirdly, Sodom and Gomorrah, God raining down fire and sulfur on those two towns.

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And then fourthly, Jonah, particularly the part in the episode when he is swallowed by the big fish and survives. Seems quite unbelievable. So four admittedly strange stories, right?
Stories that we don't see every day. At least I haven't. And what do we notice about Jesus though? Just in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus refers to all four of those stories as real history.
You can read in Matthew 19 where he talks about Adam and Eve like we just read as real historical people. You can read later in Matthew 24 about Noah and the flood and Jesus drawing lessons from that. In Matthew 10 and 11, Jesus talks about Sodom and Gomorrah.
[15:52] And in Matthew 12, Jesus talks about Jonah. And so this is a man who believes the Bible is God's word, that when the Bible speaks, God speaks. And four very challenging stories to believe in the Old Testament, he refers to as actual history because that's how the Bible presents them.

He believes God's word. And if Jesus received the entire Old Testament as the word of God, then it only makes sense that his followers would too.
If we believe Jesus, if we follow Jesus, it is right for us to think like he did, particularly about the Old Testament. But what about the New Testament? The New Testament did not exist when Jesus was on earth.
The New Testament took time not only to write, but also to collect. So even if he believed the Old Testament, why would we also have to believe the New Testament? Well, turn with me to John 16. And we'll be in John 16, verses 12 through 15. And at this point in the Gospel of John, Jesus is down to his last, really just 12 or so hours before he's crucified or before he begins to be crucified.
[17:15] And he's giving his disciples some last instructions before he departs from them. In John 16, starting in verse 12, he said, I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.
He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine, therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.
So Jesus is speaking to his 11 disciples now. Judas has already departed and began to plot against him. And Jesus is telling them that they, in particular, would receive more teaching after he leaves. They would receive the Holy Spirit who would reveal more truth to them that they couldn't handle right now. And he, the Holy Spirit, would continue to instruct them and reveal things to them.
[18:17] And this is one of the reasons the early church tried so hard to make sure the New Testament came from apostles or their close associates. These were the men that Christ made promises to.

These were the men that Christ promised to continue to teach even after he departed from them. Not only were they eyewitnesses, but they had been authorized by Jesus himself to teach the church the rest of the things that Jesus had to say according to verse 12.
And they would then put those things into writing. And again, our belief in the Bible is not merely historical. The role of the Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles into the truth, to bring to their remembrance the things they had seen and heard.
And the Holy Spirit is still with us to this day, the author of these texts, to guide us into the truth as well. And so let's look at a couple of things. Last time we looked at, I almost said last week, it was not last week, but last time we looked at canonization, so how the church got the books of the New Testament, and transmission, so how those books got to us through history.
Tonight I want to look at a couple of more things, one of which is inspiration. Inspiration. And when it comes to the Bible and theology, the word inspiration doesn't have the same meaning that we usually intend when we say the word.
[19:38] When we say the word, we're thinking like, man, that game was inspiring. Or that inspired me. Or like Chicago, you're the inspiration. When we talk about the Bible, that's not what we mean.

We mean that all of Scripture, though it's written by men, ultimately comes from God and is God's word. And at this church, we believe that all of Scripture is inspired by God down to the very words. Every single word is from God. And it's not just the main ideas or the themes or just the spiritual things. Every word comes from God.
No stray details, no wasted words. Each individual word comes from God. And as I mentioned last time, when we talk about inspiration, technically that only applies to the original documents.

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The copies that we have are trustworthy, and we can say they're inspired only insofar as they accurately reflect and translate the originals. So I use ESV, that's my translation of choice.
[20:49] Some of you like NAS or others, and those are inspired insofar as they accurately translate the originals. The originals are the inspired text, and the documents we have today are trustworthy.

And we also don't say that the writers themselves were inspired. So we don't say Peter was inspired, we don't say Paul was inspired, rather the words they wrote in the Bible were inspired. These men still sinned, they were not perfect in their personal lives, but their writings in the New Testament are perfect. And some people will object to this point and say, well, because the Bible was written by men, because it had human authors, and humans all make mistakes, we all make errors, therefore the Bible has to be riddled with errors.
We're all human, they were too, so they must have made mistakes. But do we only make mistakes as human beings? Do we only make errors as humans?
Be careful how you answer those, because if you say that being human requires us to make mistakes, then we'd have to say that Adam wasn't fully human until he rebelled against God.
[22:06] We'd have to say that Jesus was not fully human because he never rebelled against God, and we would have to say that one day in heaven we will be less than human because we will never sin again when we're in his presence.

And so sin and mistakes don't belong to humanity by nature. It does by the fall. We make mistakes and we sin because of the fall, but by nature as we were created, sin and humanity don't naturally go together as God created the world.
But even now, after the fall, even though we are sinners, it's still possible for us as human beings to be completely accurate in certain statements that we communicate. So for example, my name is Joey Snodgrass.
I have three children. I like tacos. All three of those are perfectly true, especially the last one. Maybe inspired. And so we admit that it's at least possible for us as human beings to speak things that are completely true.
And when God is directly involved in the process, like writing his word, we can have every confidence that he has preserved his word.
[23:18] The fact that we as human beings are finite and now, because of the fall, sinful, does not mean that we always make errors when we speak. And some people will say, what about all the contradictions in the Bible?

That's a common objection and there are several examples they point to. We'll look at a couple. I've got them up on a slide. That seems a little small, but oh well. So, first of all, if you're talking to someone and they say there's contradictions in the Bible, just say, can you give me an example? Because nine times out of ten, they don't know what they're talking about. They heard something on YouTube and they're just repeating it. But here's an example of something like they would point to. So, on the left, you have Matthew 28, 2.
It simply says, and behold, there's a great earthquake for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. Okay, then Luke 24, recording the same event.
While they're perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. Okay, so a skeptic or a critic would look at these two things and say, okay, was there one angel or were there two?
[24:22] Which is it, Matthew and Luke? Get your story straight. Well, looking at Matthew, does Matthew say there were not two angels? He says there was an angel there.

Even if there were ten angels, that's a perfectly true statement. And Luke's saying there are two men there. Both of these can both be true at the same time. And there's an example. So our senior guys at the end of summer decided, hey, let's do a sunrise Bible study together.
We'll have one of us just kind of lead us through studying the word and it'll be a sunrise Bible study super early in the morning. It'll be great. I heard some conflicting reports on how it went.
I was asking how it went and someone said, oh yeah, it was so great. And I was like, that's such a good idea to do it in the morning. They're like, oh, that was Zach's idea. Zach came up with it. Then I heard another report that Zach wasn't even there.

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And I'm like, okay, so was it Zach's idea or was Zach not there? Both were actually true. It was Zach's idea and Zach overslept. So just because reports initially may seem contradictory or information may not line up does not mean that there's a contradiction.
[25:34] It could just be a different way of presenting things or in the case of Zach, both things could be true even though they seem contrary. So how can the Bible be considered the very word of God?

We don't have scientific proof of inspiration. There's no way we can scientifically prove that. It's a confession of faith in the God who created us. We do not need to feel obligated to prove that.
We can say, this is what we believe and here are our reasons. The battle for the Bible is a spiritual war. Sinners are at war with the written word of God just as they are against the word of God made flesh.
We like to think that we are neutral people who analyze things with perfect balance and perfect understanding but we are sinners and sin distorts our view of reality.
We need the spirit of God to help us to see and think clearly. Okay, if you go with me to 2 Timothy, this is the next to last place we'll land. 2 Timothy chapter 3.
[26:41] We get a couple definitions here of inspiration towards the end of the New Testament. 2 Timothy 3 verse 16, highly familiar verse, all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for proof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Paul says, all scripture, this was certainly inclusive of the Old Testament and even of the New Testament and he says, it is breathed out by God. That means it's spoken by God.
When you speak, you can't help but exhale. Don't try it right now. God has breathed out, he has spoken the word of God and I want you to consider how powerful the breath of God is throughout the scriptures.
Psalm 33 verse 6, by the word of Yahweh the heavens were made and by the breath of his mouth all their host. Hebrews 11 3 says, by faith we understand the world was created by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.
The Bible has the same power that created the universe. God breathed out his words to men who wrote them down. These men used their own writing abilities but they knew they were writing the words of God.
[28:11] The Bible was written by God. The Bible was written by men. The Bible has been communicated across centuries in various ways at various different times.

God could have revealed them to one man at one time but he did not do that. Instead he used over 40 different authors across a span of time of about 1500 years who came from all different walks of life.
Some were statesmen, some were scholars, some were shepherds, soldiers or servants, some were poets and prophets, some were physicians, some were Pharisees, some were monarchs or masters and there was even a tax collector who wrote a book of the Bible.
They had different personalities and different writing styles, all of them used by God, all of them with amazing and beautiful unity. Many of them wrote things beyond their own understanding, beyond what they could grasp with their own minds, showing that what was revealed to them was the words of God.
And last place we'll go, 2 Peter chapter 1. Peter is talking about the reliability of Scripture and essentially what he says is that the word of God is more trustworthy than our experiences.
[29:35] God's word is more certain than the things that we know for sure happened. And so he talks about seeing the transfiguration, seeing the glory of Christ and then verse 19, and we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place.

And if you look down in verse 21, the last phrase, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
This is what was taking place when God's word was being written. And so God's word is incredibly deep. In anything that is written, we have the human author, we also have the divine author, and yet one intended meaning.
All of God's words communicated to us without flaw and without error. And there's amazing fulfillment in scripture.

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You can read about all kinds of prophecies the Old Testament predicted that came true in Christ. And the Bible itself claims to last forever. Isaiah 40, verse 8, the grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.
[30:48] And compare that to the words of men. During, after Trump lost the last election, there were all kinds of charismatic, you know, prophets, self-proclaimed, who said, you know, Trump is actually going to be in office at the end of this year.

How did that turn out? Didn't age well. I speak a word and my two-year-old disobeys me directly. Okay, so our words don't have power, but God's words put the heavens in place.
God's words spoke creation into existence. And so how is it that we grow as Christians? How is it that we become better and stronger in our faith?
It is through the Bible. When we read the Bible, we hear the voice of our God. And the more you read the Bible, the more convinced you will be it's the word of God.
The Spirit who is the author will testify to your heart that it is God's word. This is called the self-authentication of God's word. It testifies to us that its words are true.
[31:50] And because of that, the Bible is a great evangelistic tool. We are looking for people who hear the shepherd's voice, encourage them to read Scripture, encourage them to read the Gospels, and God's word has the same power that put the stars in their place.

So many critics, so many people who doubt the Bible have never seriously read the Bible. And so we want to be those who point them to Scripture and help them read and understand it.
And remember, again, this is something that their natural mind can't fully comprehend. They need the help of the Spirit. And when we're inviting people to trust in God's word and ultimately to trust in Christ, we're trying to convince them to do something that they don't have a category for.
And so we just want to invite them to drink. Invite them to drink deeply from the truths of Scripture. We cannot convince or argue them into thinking the Bible is God's word, but they can be convinced by the Holy Spirit himself.
So read the Bible. The author is not dead, but he is living and loves to help people understand it. So as we close, we've examined the historical claims of the Gospels and examined what those claims might mean for the rest of the Bible.
[33:13] I don't want us just to walk away and say, okay, so the Bible's true. Cool. It should cause us to fall more deeply in love with God himself. The Scriptures are not a dead end.

They're not a cul-de-sac. They're a means of helping us know and relate to God. And if we're convinced of this, we ought to share it with others. So I would encourage you to be evangelists, to help people get access to God's Word and see God open their eyes.
And we want to be those who love the Bible. We are God's people and we have God's book. And so let us live by it and delight in it. Pray with me.
Our Father, we thank you for allowing us to gather together once more as your people. And we thank you. We rejoice in your revelation of yourself through your book, the Bible.
So Father, help us to delight in it. Help us to rejoice in it. Give us joy as we read your Word and as we know you through your Word. As John 20, 31 says, these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
[34:23] And Father, help us to believe. We believe that, but help our unbelief and help us to bring others to that belief as well. So Father, I pray as we go out this week, you keep us safe and help us be faithful.

And it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Thank you guys for being here. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
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