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# Pursuit and Promise, Pt. 3

## Our Firm Foundation

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**These arguments today are some of the more common objections as it relates to Christianity – and more specifically to the revelation of God to humanity through His Word.**

*“The Bible may be filled with good advice... but you really shouldn’t take everything in it so seriously. There’s so much allegory and imagery, you really don’t know what’s meant to be taken literally or not...”*

*“It’s just a book written by people that lived a long time ago, they had none of our modern sensibilities... it promotes intolerance and bigotry, and oppression...”*

*“Many of the teachings are so offensive and narrow-minded and exclusive... don’t expect me to treat the Bible **authoritatively** for my life.”*

**In Peter’s second letter to the early church in Asia minor, he goes after some of the cultural objections they were facing in their day – and addresses many of the same objections we face in our day.**

### **2 Peter 1:15**

I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

- He’s trying to build for them a strong foundation to stand on.
- Can I really trust what the Bible says?
- Can I really trust what the writers are telling me?

### **2 Peter 1:15**

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**.<sup>17</sup> 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,”<sup>18</sup> **we ourselves heard** this very voice borne from heaven, for **we were with him** on the holy mountain.<sup>19</sup> 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**, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,<sup>20</sup> knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.<sup>21</sup> 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**.

**THE INSPIRED WORD  
THE INVASIVE WORD  
THE INCARNATE WORD**

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## **The Inspired Word**

*One of the issues that Peter is addressing in the church is the emergence of false doctrine and false teachers. Dangerous doctrines were creeping their way into the early church.*

*“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”<sup>1</sup>  
~ AW Tozer*

## **Question—Why?**

**What you believe about God, radically affects what you believe about yourself.  
And what you believe about yourself radically affects how you live.**

### **EXAMPLE:**

**If I believe that God is distant, and cold, and uninvolved in my day-to-day life —**

- that tells me is that I’m utterly alone and I’ve got to fend for myself.
- whatever good I have or don’t have in my life is the result of my own effort or lack of effort.
- the pressure of that kind of worldview leads to all kinds of dysfunction

**If I believe that God formed me, He sees me, and knows me, and loves me** enough to come down and walk with me and prove His love for all of us through unbelievable sacrifice... and rose again because He loves me, and ascended to His throne, and gave me power through the Holy Spirit to live a victorious life... and *that He’s always with me...*

- that is going to radically change how I see myself and how I live in the world
- **I can live life with confidence knowing that I’m not alone**

### **2 Peter 1:20**

...no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.

- The phrase prophecy of Scripture, it’s not talking about a foretelling of future events... it’s talking about the Divine message contained within the Scriptures
- the Scriptures didn’t come from one individual’s interpretation of historical events
- the Divine message of Scripture has a Divine source behind it

### **2 Peter 1:21**

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.**

- the Holy Spirit influenced, spoke, moved through human writers to reveal Himself, His will, His ways to the world.

### **2 Timothy 3:16**

All Scripture is breathed out by God...

- it’s true that there are 40 different writers of the Scripture... there is only one Author
- the Scriptures should never be interpreted in a vacuum... in isolation of the broader storyline of the Bible
- you have to ‘use Scripture to interpret Scripture’
- If you take a verse out of the context of its setting, and out of the context of the broader biblical narrative, you’ll find yourself in all kinds of trouble...

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<sup>1</sup>Tozer, A.W. *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God* (General Press, Mar 8, 2019)

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## The Invasive Word

### 2 Peter 1:19

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**, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

- one of the most common objections that modern people use to dismiss the Scriptures is they say, *“the writings are offensive, archaic, they’re not up to speed with our modern sensibilities.*
- we have an entire culture of people who dismiss the scriptures — or *assume that if God really did exist that **He wouldn’t have any opinions or ideas that would be offensive to them***

When you read the book of Genesis, you could say *“See! It’s promoting these horrible things! The awful treatment of women and younger children in families, it’s terrible!”*

**Robert Alter, who is a Jewish Scholar and an expert in ancient Jewish literature...** states that if that’s what you think the book of Genesis is doing, promoting these horrible ideas, you’re actually reading it wrong. He says that if you actually dig a little deeper and understand the broader narrative of the book of Genesis you’ll see two things:<sup>2</sup>

1. In every generation, polygamy brings horrendous destruction and dysfunction. What you see in Genesis is that polygamy brings absolute disaster socially, culturally, spiritually, emotionally, psychologically relationally, in every way. It is a total mess.
2. In primogeniture, in every generation throughout the book of Genesis, God actually favors the younger son, not the older. It’s Abel, not Cain. It’s Isaac, not Ishmael. It’s Jacob, not Esau.

Alter says, *“when you read Genesis rightly, you realize what that it’s not supporting these horrible things, it’s subverting them. It’s overturning those ancient patriarchal institutions at every point.”*

### Peter says, it’s a lamp that shines in the dark places...

Another one that gets repeated a lot is, *“Well, the Bible promotes slavery, and slavery is wrong, therefore the Bible must be wrong too.”*

There were major differences between slavery, as we understand it, and slavery in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. A historian named Murray Harris wrote extensively about this...<sup>3</sup>

1. It wasn’t racially motivated
2. It wasn’t a life sentence (normally able to buy their own freedom after 10 years)
3. Slaves owned slaves

When the Bible speaks to slavery, never once does it condone or promote it as a good thing, it just acknowledges it as a cultural reality and speaks to personal, godly conduct within the context the relational dynamics that existed at that time in history.

**The Scriptures give us the Imago Dei,  
the Christian Doctrine that tells us that all people are created in the image of God,  
and therefore are deserving of the utmost dignity and respect.**

*Anyone that claims that the Bible condones or promotes slavery or inequality among people groups are at best confused — or at worst, knowingly pushing an anti-Christian agenda to skew people’s opinions of Jesus, of Christianity, and the Bible.*

**We need to be careful we’re not projecting a 21<sup>st</sup> century mindset on a 1<sup>st</sup> century world... it will skew your thinking as to what the Bible is actually doing and saying.**

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<sup>2</sup> Alter, Robert. *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (W.W. Norton, 1996)

<sup>3</sup> Harris, Murray J. *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ* (InterVarsity Press, May 29, 2001)

If your view of God conveniently aligns with all of your opinions and preferences, you don't have God, you have an idol. You don't want to submit to God, you want God to submit to you. You've created a God in your own image. **If your God never offends you, you don't actually know God.**

**Light is offensive to the darkness.  
The two can't coexist in the same space.  
Light intrudes, invades, confronts, repels darkness.  
And this is exactly what the Scriptures do.**

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## The Incarnate Word

### 2 Peter 1:16-18

...we were **eyewitnesses of his majesty**.<sup>17</sup> 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,"<sup>18</sup> **we ourselves heard** this very voice borne from heaven, for **we were with him** on the holy mountain.

- Peter is talking about the fact that He witnessed Jesus' transfiguration

### Matthew 17:1-3

...Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.<sup>2</sup> And he was **transfigured** before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.<sup>3</sup> And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

- In the middle of that glorious moment Peter says

### Matthew 17:4

"Lord, it is good that we are here..."

- Peter ignores them

### Matthew 17:4-5

"Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."<sup>5</sup> **He was still speaking** when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; **listen to him.**"

- Peter was being so obnoxious that the Father from heaven said, "Peter, stop talking. Listen to what my Son is saying right now."

### Matthew 17:6

When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified.

**Question** — Now, why in the world Peter referring back to this event? Why is he bringing it up in his second letter to the early church?

**Peter is writing to the early church to say, "I'm not making this up! I was an eyewitness, it's true... it's historical fact, not some clever story or myth."**

**God has not only revealed Himself to us through the written Word, but He's revealed himself to us through the incarnate Word. His Son. He came down in flesh and walked among us... and He was transformed right in front of my eyes and I was an eyewitness to His glory."**

See, Peter says, the **written Word**, the **inspired Word** is a **lamp in a dark place**. But then He describes **the Incarnate Word** that **shines so brightly** that we can't even look upon His face... it shines like the sun...

## **John 1:1-4**

In the beginning was **the Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The **light shines in the darkness**, and **the darkness has not overcome it**.

### **Jesus is the true light that dispels the darkness.**

- He is the light that subdues every dark and devious thought that aligns itself against Him, His Kingdom, and His people.
- Christ's return is a certainty.

### **The written and incarnate Word is like a lamp**

- it invades everything
- darkness cannot overcome it

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## **Discussion Questions**

1. If someone asks you, "How do you know that the Bible is true?" what do you say?
2. What comes into *your* mind when you think about God? How does that affect your daily life?
3. Read 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16. Discuss the importance of understanding that although there are 40 different writers of the Scripture, there is only one Author.
4. What does it mean that you have to use Scripture to interpret Scripture?"
5. Does your view of God align with all of your opinions and preferences? Or does God ever offend you?
6. Is there any darkness in your life where you need the Light of Christ to shine in and overcome that darkness?

# NOTES