The Word of God in Biblical Perspective The Amazing Evidences Of Divine Inspiration Hebrews 1:1-4 By: Dr. Harry Reeder August 23, 2009 – Morning Sermon

We will be looking at Hebrews 1 and 2 in this study. We'll also be looking at a couple of other passages of Scripture. Please join us this evening as we bring the Lord's Day to a close in praise and worship to God as we prepare for next week. We have been doing a series on Jonah in the evening and we are in Jonah 3. You will see the exciting story of the conversion of a pagan city by the power of the Word of Lord. There are some very interesting insights into it. Now look with me as we look at the text for this study.

Hebrews 1:1-4 says, **1** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. **3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

This Savior who has ascended in triumph who has given us His Word where God has finally spoken in His Son says in Hebrews 2:1-4; *1 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. 2 For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, 4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*

The grass withers. The flower fades. The Word of our God abides forever, by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

The grass withers. The flower fades. The Word of our Lord abides forever. A couple of weeks ago Cindy and I had the opportunity to be away on vacation. We worked it out so that we could stop and worship where I had the privilege to serve the Lord for 17 years at Christ Covenant. When it was over I of course, saw a lot of dear folks. A little boy who somehow got to be 6 foot 2 within the 10 years since I had seen him, came up to me with a twinkle in his eye and said, "Pastor!" I said, "Yes." He said, "The grass withers. The flower fades but the Word of the Lord abides forever, right?" I said, "It sure does." That is something I have said on every Lord's Day for 30 years after the reading of God's Word because I believe it's true. I always feel for you because I know after I have read the Scripture it's all down hill from there because that is the living, abiding, unfailing, reliable Word of God. It's something we have taken the time to look at to declare this text that's in front of you which says that Jesus has finally spoken.

Remember this. Tuck this away in your mind. Don't drift away from it. Why would the Bible tell believers not to drift away if it wasn't possible for us to drift away from being connected to that Word, which is reliable, which cannot be broken, which

Jesus has given us the Word of the Lord? I've done something this week on purpose where a gentleman came up to me today, one of the fathers in our church and he said to me, "God is sovereign and in control." I said, "How do you know He's sovereign and in control? Where did you get that idea? Is that wish projection?" Another man came up to me and said, "Pastor, we're on our way to heaven in Jesus." I said, "How do you know?" Another person said, "God's always faithful." How do you know? Do you know how we know those things and everything else in Christianity? The Book tells me He's sovereign. The Book tells me He's in control. The Book tells me that all things work together for good for those who love God. The Book tells me that my God is able to keep me. The Book tells me that Jesus saves me from my sins. The Book tells me He is faithful and will never leave us nor forsake us.

Now, can I trust that Book? One may be thinking, "Yes pastor, you have already done five sermons on why we can trust that Book." I have two more. This study today I thought would be something interesting for us to look at. Remember no church makes the Bible the Word of God. No church counsel makes the Bible the Word of God. No believer makes the Bible the Word of God. The fact that I believe it doesn't make it the Word of God. It's the Word of God because God made it the Word of God. It is also because God gave it to us and God's Word says it is the Word of God. Now, I believe it. If it is the Word of God, wouldn't it be reasonable that God would show up in it? Wouldn't there be clues that it's God's Word? There are some authors that I read and I know that when I read that author I know what that person is going to say some where and there are certain things that happen when that author is there. The Bible has 40 plus human authors. The Author behind the author is there. Now wouldn't God kind of show up in the Word if it is His Word? Wouldn't there be evidences, clues, God sized finger prints on it and some God sized foot prints in it?

That's what I want to do in this study. I want to take you through, not exhaustively but at least take you through five of those clues that God is the Author of Scripture and therefore reliable and therefore we can build our life on it. I don't get my life back and I'm moving through it. It's going faster and faster and faster. I don't know how much more I have left but I know I have less left than I used to have. A man said to me when he was 50, "Well, pastor I'm 50 years old, I went to the back 9." I said, "Friend, wake up, you've been on the back 9. In fact, you can see the club house from where you are right now." I've given my life to this. I live everyday for the enormous privilege to be able to teach you this Word. I've given my life to it.

This church squarely stands upon it. It's a great thing to ponder to follow a legend in Alabama when I took over pastoring this church and when the founding pastor of this church was honored in that service and he prayed all week, "What do I do to be able to say what we are passing on?" So if you come to my office you will see that he handed me a Bible. He said to me, "Teach it, preach it." We have given this church to this. Therefore we can reasonable expect there are some footprints in it that authenticate all the claims that are there, that affirm it, that give us the clues of what it says is true. So here are the five clues/footprints.

The first foot print is the durability of God's Word. Every human book can and will be destroyed but not this one because this is the Word of God. It is durable. There is in your Bible a Psalm called Psalm 119. It has 176 verses in it. The entirety of that Psalm has been constructed to tell you the value, the reliability and your living, obedient,

searching, studious relationship to God's Word. But I think my favorite verse out of that entire Psalm is verse 89 which says, "Forever, O Lord, your Word is firmly fixed in the heavens." Forever settled in the heavens is the Word of God. There's not another book I can say that about. Books rise and fall. Books are lost and destroyed. Books are set aside. The Word of the Lord will stand and it's not because it hasn't had its antagonist. All of recorded history beginning from the garden, the Bible has been assaulted. It has been assaulted and attacked by Satan, tyrants, despites, Persian monarchs, Greek monarchs, Alexander the Great and Roman Emperors. They have all attacked Christianity in general and the Bible in particular. It has withstood heretics. It has even withstood the last 200 years of focused attack upon it.

Much of the last 200 years of focused attack has taken place within the sphere of professing Christendom, even within our seminaries who are supposed to train people in the confidence of God's Word. Just this last year the elected leader of an entire communion/denomination of professing Christendom stood and asked the world to forgive the church that this person represents, for this enormous heresy and burden that we have promulgated from the Bible which says that every individual should have Christ as a personal Savior. Can you imagine that? While that causes me discouragement and dismay it doesn't cause me any anxiety. The Bible will withstand that particular bishop's pronouncement. It has withstood tyrants, demons, despites, and Satan. The Bible is durable. The Bible will not be broken. It is sure. All who build their life upon it can stand sure.

I went to Westminster Seminary and one of the men from Princeton Seminary who discipled, trained and had a great impact on a lot of those that established Westminster was by a guy named Robert Dick Wilson. Robert Dick Wilson was an enormously effective professor and his focus on the Old Testament was phenomenal but he had a focus within a focus and for 45 years he made 40 kings from the Bible his focus. These kings cover 1400 to 1500 years in span of reign, these dynasties and he studied all of them in the Bible. He was so overwhelmed at the accuracy of the Word of God concerning these kings and their reign and I'm just talking about one little sliver of your Bible. I am referring to 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles. Forty plus years of this man's life was devoted to studying the kings from those books. As he finished this study and moved toward the end of his life he said, "One thing I have become absolutely convinced about is there is no inaccuracy in God's Word." "Other books that try to cover such things even in much smaller amounts," he said, "are always whittled with errors and inaccuracy, but not the Word of God."

Then Wilson got a mathematician to help him and they came up with this configuration; "For the Bible to be accurate on 40 kings that cover a period of 1500 years, the chances are 1 in 750 trillion trillion chances." I don't even know what that number is but that sounds big to me. The Bible is durable. Nelson Glueck who is probably the foremost Biblical archeologist who personally inspected and categorized and profiled over 1,000 Biblical archeological sites then said this after 4 decades; "No archeological evidence has or I believe ever will, contradict the accuracy and credibility of the Word of God. On the contrary, all I have studied only affirms it's true." Obviously there are attacks all over the place that can continue to be examined that we could talk about but the one thing that is clear is that the Bible, after attack over all of recorded history, stands true.

One may say, "What about the matter of science, pastor?" The Bible is not a science book. It is given to us in the language of the day. It's what we call phenomenal language, like "the sun rises, the sun sets." We still use that language today. We are not speaking scientifically. We are speaking the phenomena that we observe. The Bible is give to us in the language of the day but periodically the Bible will make statements that are so unbelievable accurate scientifically before science as a discipline was really considered the way that it is today. For instance, when the Prophets talk about God sitting on the circle of the earth, my goodness, where did that come from? That is certainly not what people thought then. Or when the Prophets tell us He hangs the earth upon nothing, most people back then thought it was sitting on a turtle. Then there are the wisdom books or Ecclesiastes that give us the hydrological cycle where it declares the clouds empty, the rains fall and fill the rivers that run to the oceans and then rise to the clouds again.

Then you have the three basic categories of science already being addresses in Genesis 1:1 of space, time and matter. *In the beginning...* which is time, *God created the heavens...* which is space, *and the earth...* which is matter. Then you have what the Scriptures declare today that life is in the blood. The Scriptures are durable. They stand with integrity and veracity and that you would expect if it's God's Word that God's Word would be able to stand.

A second fingerprint in the Bible is miracles. Miracles are just recorded in the Bible. The passage for this study from Hebrews referred to signs, wonders and miracles and they show up and are recorded in the Bible. In fact, those who are recording the Bible for us, the authors of Scripture, do signs, wonders and miracles as attesting credentials that they are speaking the Word of God. So what are these signs, wonders and miracles that are in the Bible? There are about 250 of them that are recorded in the Bible. Miracles are an interesting study that I have no time to cover in this study but let me answer basically this, what's signs, wonders and miracles? The way I like for you to understand that phrase is to just flip the phrase to miracles, wonders and signs. Miracles are acts of God that are inexplicable in the laws of nature. God has created the natural order. A miracle is something inexplicable in the natural order. There is no way that it can be explained other than God did it. So if the Bible is the Word of God and if God engages in the natural order then whenever God shows up who is supernatural then guess what that is? That's a miracle. Why do you have a miracle? It is to create wonder. Why are there miracles that are inexplicable to create wonder? It is because God's doing something, it's a sign. God's getting our attention about something.

What is really amazing to me is that not only are they in the Bible and I would expect them to be in the Bible but I am amazed at the way they show up in the Bible. Let me try to show it to you this way. I love to think about the miracles. When I was a bit younger there was a man who was actually a pretty good commentator on the Bible in many ways and his name was William Barkley. He kind of took on the task to make miracles more palatable for the modern mind. So he went out to show how miracles really aren't inexplicable. You can explain them so you don't have to be embarrassed that they are in the Bible. In fact he found a bush that's out in the desert that has a berry and if it gets real hot that berry will smolder. So we can believe in the burning bush now. Of course, the miracle says it's a flame and Jesus, the Angel of the Lord, is speaking from it. Barkley hasn't helped me yet here.

My favorite one which I think I have mentioned before, is Barkley found a phenomena at the Reed Sea, which is near Egypt and sounds very close to the Red Sea, that there is a little piece of it that is kind of swampy and when the wind blows real hard you can almost get across it pretty well. So that is the way Israel got across so we're okay. It's the parting of the sea. But like all these things I'm now confronted with a bigger problem where the Egyptian army which was the best trained army in the world, then drowned in 2 inches of water. Now there's another miracle I have to have somebody explain to me.

What I love about it is the way miracles just kind of show up in the Bible. They are just there. God's fingerprint, footprint just shows up. This is one of my favorite miracles in the Bible found in Numbers 22. This miracle is the account of the first Presbyterian pastor/preacher in the Bible. Some of you already know what I'm talking about don't you? This is about a man by the name of Balaam. Was he the Presbyterian minister? No it wasn't him but you're getting close. Here in this passage God tells Balaam to go with the men of Moab that come to him.

Numbers 22:20-30 says, 20 And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, rise, go with them; but only do what I tell you." 21 So Balaam rose in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab. 22 But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. 23 And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. 24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. 25 And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. 26 Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. 28 Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey (here's the miracle), and she said to Balaam, (If I had been writing this what I would have put next would have been something like; "Now you won't believe what happened next. This is a donkey talking to Balaam!) "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" 29 And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you." 30 And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?" And he said, "No."

The Bible just plops this miracle right down. It doesn't give you any explanation. Why? It's a miracle. When God acts it's a miracle. Can God make a donkey talk or give Presbyterian preachers sermons? Yes and of course it doesn't stop there. We have another miracle when Balaam starts talking back to the donkey. Then the donkey takes Balaam through logic 101. I'm not going to go any further with this but can you see how God does His miracles like when Jesus turned the water into wine. The Bible never apologizes for the miracles, it just says it. Why? It is because this is a footprint of God, this is a clue. It is God showing up. So you would expect miracles to be in the Bible.

The very Bible you have is a miraculous gift of God that God has not only opened the mouths of donkeys but of Apostles and Prophets to give us this Word.

The third footprint of God is prophecy. The Bible contains scores of prophecies. There are 60 plus prophecies on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Let's look at Deuteronomy 18. This is a prophecy of Jesus, the Prophet greater than Moses but I want you to see what it says about Prophets. Deuteronomy 18:20 says, *But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.* 'So if you're not a true prophet and you claim to be one what's the penalty? It's death, you get stoned. He goes on to say in Deuteronomy 18:21, 22, 21 And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?'—22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him. So if a prophet declares something to come through a prophecy and it does not occur then he's liable for death. The fact that there are scores of prophecies in the Bible does not make it the Word of God but it could quickly make it not the Word of God if they are not fulfilled. God Himself tells you that.

Have you heard of a man named Nostradamus? I think he has a very forced 11 percent success rate of predicting things. Then when I was growing up there was a woman by the name of Jean Dixon. She always had 25 predictions, prophetic statements for the next year and it would come in a weekly magazine in the paper around January. It would always start off "Last year 3 of her 25 came true." That would have just gotten you killed in the Bible. That wouldn't get you another article next year. Her prophecies were like "This coming year there will be a scandal in the United States Government." That's a real prophecy there, don't you think? I can be assured of that one. But throughout your Bible are all of these prophecies and as they are given they are fulfilled. As their fulfilled it shows. God has shown up. For God, what is prophecy? He is only prewriting the history He has ordained to come to pass. That's all He is doing.

The fourth fingerprint is the unity of Scripture and the centrality of Christ. Let's look at Luke 24. Here is a time where two disciples are very discouraged. They don't know what to make of Christ's death and now this rumor that Jesus has risen and Jesus says to them in Luke 24:25, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" Now after Jesus left look at what the men said in Luke 24:32; They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" In other words, they went from a slow heart to a burning heart. How did that happen? Jesus opened the Scriptures. What did He says when He talked to them and opened the Scriptures? This is found in Luke 24:27 when it says, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets (the Old Testament at this time), he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." All the Scriptures are designed to point where? They point to Christ and this is reemphasized in Luke 24:44-46 which says, 44 Then he said to 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 and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ...

So the Scriptures are there to point to Christ. The Bible is so exciting. You have the adventure of David and Goliath, you have romance, you have loyalty, you have

combat, you have adventure and all of these narratives in the Bible but the narrative of all the narratives is simply the majesty and glory of the Triune God revealed in Jesus Christ and Him crucified for you. Everything in the Bible points right there. Isn't it great? When I'm reading something I'm thinking, "What's the main point?" and yet no matter where I'm reading in the Bible I know who the Main Point is and that's Jesus. He is my Lord, my King, my Sovereign, my Savior. So how did that happen with 40 plus human authors over 1600 years, in multiple cultures, from multiple occupations like fishermen, priests, kings, prophets, carpenters? It happened because God Himself is speaking and they realize it by consensus. What would they men say? They would all say, "Thus says the Lord" over 700 hundred times in your Bible.

The fifth footprint, clue, is changed lives, changed cultures and changed nations. If the Word of God is the Word of God then it's going to bring change because if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Let's look at 1 Corinthians 6. I love this passage. I am in this passage. Here's a place in the Bible where I am. I hope and pray you are here too. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. The Word of the Lord came and you were washed, sanctified and justified.

Do you still have those principles of sin dwelling within you? Absolutely. Do we need to kill them everyday? Absolutely, but I've got the victory. I don't have to be an idolater, sexually immoral, a liar, a glutton, or a drunkard. I don't have to be that anymore because I have the power of the living God and His Word at work within me and "such were some of you..." We always need to be very humble and realize that we in ourselves could slip and fall at any moment so we put no confidence in the flesh but we must also know that in Christ we have the victory. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation. God changes people with His powerful Word.

A slave trader killing those in bondage in his ships, treating them terribly and throwing them overboard if they are making too much noise and this slave trader gets convicted, converted, changed and becomes a preacher. He writes hymns that we love to sing like *Amazing Grace*, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found. I was blind but now I see. Such were some of you. Then this man discipled and trained a man who would for over 30 years remove the despicable slave trade from England. His name was William Wilburforce. Here is a religious terrorist who kills Christians then he gets converted and Saul becomes Paul and we get evangelism. We get all kinds of things that are happening. This is because of God's powerful Word.

Do you know what my anscestors were? They were barbarians that worshiped idols that were pagans and they lived in polygamy, bigamy, beastiality, and homosexuality and all of those sexually immoral and promiscuous acts of perversion and then some missionaries came and preached the Gospel in the veils and glens of Europe and men and women were saved and brought up from death unto life. Isn't it interesting

that today as our culture disconnects from the Word were descending right back where we were but where the Word of God is at work change takes place. When people change, families change. When families change, nations change.

In light of this study I'm going to give you three commitments we need to make. The first principle commitment we need to make at Briarwood is that we will stay connected to the Word of God as the lifeline from the Lord. I know this is so obvious and it may be but it is so easy to get distracted. Here is what Martin Luther said a magazine titled Table Talk; "The **greatest disaster** to befall any Christian or any church is to be disconnected or to be detoured/ distracted from the Word of God." Every worship service, every hymn we sing, every sermon we preach, every confession we make, every prayer we make, and every time we assemble the Word of God must be center. We must be principle, centered upon it. I love the excitements, the insights and the things that people bring to the church but the one thing that must stand central to us that we cannot move off of, that we must remain connected to, we can't distracted or disconnected from it, and it must be the Word of God.

The same thing is true for your life, dear Christian. Don't get distracted from it. There is nothing more important in your life to know and love and follow Jesus Christ than for you humbly by the Spirit of God to stay connected to the Word of God. It's more important that Auburn and Alabama football. It's more important that your job. It's more important that even your family because you can't do for your family what you need to do for your family without the Word of God doing its work in your heart and your life. We live in perilous times in our nation. I know Jesus Christ is the One who can bring us through and bring things to where they need to be but only if God's people stay connected to the Word.

Secondly, we need to make a strategic commitment. Every ministry we do and every ministry endeavor we do must bring forth the primacy of the Word of God. Every ministry, Sunday school class, small group, outreach ministry, mercy ministry and every thing we do must be penetrated by the Word of God, prescribed by the Word of God, focused upon the Word of God and absolutely saturated with the Word of God. In missions we are going to send out preachers of the Word, disciplers, evangelizers. I know there are support positions that need to be supported and that's what we are going to stay focused upon. One of the greatest things we can do is to get out the Bible to people.

Do you remember in the last study when I talked about Adoniram Judson? He spent 17 years translating the Bible and in the 19th year with 3,000 copies distributed a revival broke out. William Carey gave almost all of his life to get the Bible into 38 languages. Then the Gospel went all around India and places that you can never imagine. There is such power. This week I got a letter back from Uganda dealing with what you did about 4 years ago in sending hundreds of copies of the modern Reformation Study Bible to the pastors of Uganda and its still reverberating.

One of the greatest things we are doing right now is to support Baruch Maoz in Israel. Right now, he is translating the New Testament into Modern Hebrew. Do you know what may happen when the Bible, the New Testament is translated into Modern Hebrew and cut loose in the land of Israel? I think that is one of the most strategic things that we can possibly do.

To sum up, we need to make a principle commitment, personally and corporately to stay connected to the Word of God in anything and everything. We need to make a strategic commitment that God's Word will guide us, permeate and we'll send out preachers, teachers and translators of the Word of God as well as into every aspect of every ministry that we do and thirdly and finally, we need to make a Biblical commitment that the centrality of Christ and the preeminence of Christ will be the focus of anything and everything that we do. Every story from the Bible will take people to the story of all stories that Jesus is the Savior. Every text, every theme, every doctrine will begin with Christ and end with Christ.

One may say, "Harry, what about the Holy Spirit?" Every text, every theme, every doctrine, every aspect of the Christian life must be Christ centered. He must be the foundation, the capstone, the center, the circumference, the substance; He has to be all of that. We must stay Christ exalting and Christ preeminent. Let me ask you a question. Who gave the Holy Spirit to you? Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to you. Why did He give the Holy Spirit to you? It was so He would bear witness of Christ to you. Who gave you your spiritual gifts? Christ did. He ascended on high and He gave gifts to men. Why did He give them to you? It was so that members of the body could function. What about the church? I love the church. I want to teach on the church. We have got to restore the church back to its rightful, sacred position in the life of a Christian but remember, the church is the Body of Christ. It's the Bride of Christ. It begins, it ends, it is all about Him. Not to us O Lord but to Thine own self. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together. Would You speak to our hearts even now. My dear friend if you have not yet come to this Christ whose footprints are all over His Word and through that Word in all of history, would you come to Him today and commit your life to Jesus Christ? His Word will not be broken and neither will your eternity nor your life. He will keep you. Dear brothers and sisters at Briarwood, would you join me with this text bringing us to the touchstone, the Word of God to declare the God of the Word and the majesty of Christ which is our blessing and that is how we long to bless this world, Father. It is that this world through us might see Jesus. I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.