

# The Uniqueness Of The Bible

I was very appreciative of the kind comments received about the sermon last Sunday evening entitled "God's Inspired Book #2" (available on our website). The lesson examined five proofs of the uniqueness of the Bible (the unity of the Bible, the Bible and history, scientific foreknowledge, fulfilled prophecy, and impartiality). Because of time constraints, the lesson did not have a lot of the information that I wanted to include, so this article will address some of the other reasons (courtesy of Josh McDowell's *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*) why the Bible is such a unique book and worthy of our faith and obedience.

## ***Circulation***

Successful books sell several hundred thousand copies all of the time. Every once in a while, a book will sell over a million copies. It is very rare for a book to sell over ten million copies. It borders on the realm of unbelievable to consider that the Bible has sold billions of copies. More copies of the Bible have been sold than any other book in history. Although other books may outsell it in a specific year, no other book comes close in terms of total circulation.

According to the United Bible Societies' *2008 Scripture Distribution Report*, last year the organization distributed 28.4 million complete Bibles and another 11.6 million testaments. When portions of scripture and selections are also included, the total distribution of copies of the Bible or portions thereof in 2008 reaches an amazing 381,800,000 -- and these numbers only include Bibles distributed by the United Bible Societies.

To put it another way, if you lined up all the people who received Bibles or scripture selections last year, and handed a Bible to one of them every five seconds, it would take more than 60 years to do what the United Bible Societies accomplished last year alone. This does not prove that the Bible is the inspired word of God, but it does prove that it is unique.

## ***Survival***

Although it was first written on perishable materials, and had to be copied and recopied for hundreds of years before the the printing press was invented, the scriptures have never faced extinction.

John Warwick Montgomery wrote, "To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested

bibliographically as the New Testament." Bruce Metzger added, "The textual critic of the New Testament is embarrassed by the wealth of his material." Bernard Ramm spoke of the accuracy and number of biblical manuscripts: "Jews preserved it as no other manuscripts have ever been preserved. With their *massora* (*parva*, *magna*, and *finalis*) they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word, and paragraph. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity -- scribes, lawyers, massorettes. Who ever counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle? Cicero or Seneca?"

It is interesting to compare the Bible with Shakespeare's writings. The text of Shakespeare has been in existence around 400 years, yet it is far more uncertain and corrupt than the text of the New Testament. With only a handful of exceptions, the text of every verse of the New Testament has been settled by the general consensus of scholars. But in every one of Shakespeare's 37 plays there are probably a hundred readings still in dispute, a large portion of them materially affecting the passage in which they occur.

### ***Criticism***

Throughout the centuries, critics and skeptics have sought to overthrow the Bible, but it just continues to be more loved, cherished, and read than ever before. Centuries of criticism has not made a dent in its popularity. If the Bible had not come from God, men would have destroyed it long ago.

Higher criticism has tried to dismantle the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and of the existence of the Hittite nation, but archaeology has shown that the Bible is accurate! Bernard Ramm wrote, "No other book has been so chopped, knived, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. What book on philosophy or religion or psychology or *belles lettres* of classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? With such venom and skepticism? With such thoroughness and erudition? Upon every chapter, line, and tenant? The Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions, and studied by millions."

### ***Persecution***

The Bible has been burned and outlawed, yet it still continues to be the most beloved book in the world. In 303 A.D., the Roman emperor Diocletian issued an edict to stop Christians from worshipping and to destroy their scriptures. Greenslade wrote, "An imperial letter was everywhere promulgated, ordering the razing of the churches to the ground and the destruction by fire of the scriptures, and proclaiming that those who held

high positions would lose all civil rights, while those in households, if they persisted in their profession of Christianity, would be deprived of their liberty." Eusebius records the amusing historical footnote that after Diocletian's death, Constantine issued an edict ordering that 50 copies of the Bible would be prepared at the government's expense.

Voltaire, the famous French infidel who died in 1778, predicted that within 100 years of his death, the gospel would cease to exist. However, few people remember Voltaire and the Bible's circulation continues to climb and now reaches to virtually every corner of the globe. Someone once said, "We might as well put our shoulder to the burning wheel of the sun, and try to stop it on its flaming course, as to attempt to stop the circulation of the Bible." Ironically, only 50 years after Voltaire's death the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of Bibles. The Bible's enemies come and go, but the word of God will remain forever (Matthew 24:35).

### ***Influence***

Gabriel Sivan wrote, "No other document in the possession of mankind offers so much to the reader -- ethical and religious instruction, superb poetry, a social program and legal code, an interpretation of history, and all the joys, sorrows, and hopes which well up in men and which Israel's prophets and leaders expressed with matchless force and passion." The Bible has had an enormous impact on Western thought. The Bible has furnished the predominant world view for at least 14 centuries, playing a major role in the formation of Western culture. Northrop Frye said, "Western literature has been more influenced by the Bible than any other book."

Geisler and Nix state, "The influence of the Bible and its teaching in the Western world is clear for all who study history. And the influential role of the West in the course of world events is equally clear. Civilization has been influenced more by the Judeo-Christian scriptures than by any other book or series of books in the world. Indeed, no great moral or religious work in the world exceeds the depth of morality in the principle of Christian love, and none has a more lofty spiritual concept than the biblical view of God. The Bible presents the highest ideals known to men, ideals that have molded civilization."

Grady Davis, in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, wrote, "The Bible brought its view of God, the universe, and mankind into all the leading Western languages, and thus into the intellectual processes of Western man ... Since the invention of printing (c. 1439), the Bible has become more than the translation of an ancient Oriental literature. It has not seemed a foreign

book, and it has been the most available, familiar, and dependable source and arbiter of intellectual, moral, and spiritual ideals in the West." One only has to consider the fact that most calendars are based around the birth of Christ to see the astounding influence the Bible and the story of Jesus has had on civilization.

The Bible simply stands alone. It is a book whose entire existence points to Christ. The Law provides the foundation for Christ, the historical books show the preparation for Christ, the poetical works aspire to Christ, and the prophecies display an expectation of Christ. In the New Testament, the gospels record the historical manifestation of Christ, Acts relates the propagation of Christ, the epistles give the interpretation of Christ, and Revelation is the consummation of everything in Christ. The importance of the Bible is a message which must be forcefully proclaimed from our pulpits and consistently taught in our homes. Younger Christians are especially vulnerable to the onslaughts of higher education which destroys faith in the scriptures. Firm up your faith, and then teach these truths to a younger generation who can benefit from knowing just how strong a case can be made for the inspiration of the Bible.

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