

The Uniqueness Of The Bible

I. UNIQUE IN ITS CONTINUITY

A. HERE IS A BOOK THAT WAS WRITTEN...

1. Over a long period of time

- a. About 1600 years
- b. A span of 40 generations

2. By approximately 40 authors from every walk of life

- a. Moses, political leader trained in the universities of Egypt
- b. Peter, fisherman
- c. Amos, herdsman
- d. Joshua, military general
- e. Nehemiah, cup bearer to the king of Persia
- f. Daniel, prime minister in the courts of Babylon
- g. Luke, physician
- h. Solomon, philosopher king
- i. Matthew, tax collector
- j. Paul, rabbi and tentmaker
- h. Nebuchadnezzar, a gentile king (Daniel 4)

3. In different places

- a. Moses in the wilderness
- b. Jeremiah in a dungeon
- c. Daniel on a hillside, and in a palace
- d. Paul inside prison walls
- e. Luke while traveling
- f. John in exile on the isle of Patmos
- g. Others in the rigors of a military campaign

4. At different times

- a. David in times of war
- b. Solomon in times of peace

5. During different moods

- a. Some writing from the heights of joy
- b. Others from the depths of sorrow and despair

6. On three continents: Asia, Africa, Europe

7. In three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek

8. With subject matter involving hundreds of controversial topics, such as:

- a. The origin of man and the universe

- b. The nature of God
- c. The nature of man, sin, and man's redemption

B. YET THERE IS HARMONY AND CONTINUITY...

1. For example:
 - a. "The Paradise Lost of the book of Genesis becomes the Paradise Regained of Revelation." - **Geisler and Nix**
 - b. "Whereas the gate to the Tree of Life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation." - **ibid.**
2. Compare the continuity of the Bible with any other writings of men
 - a. Imagine what you would have if you took just ten authors...
 - 1) From one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language
 - 2) Speaking on just one controversial subject
 - b. You would have a conglomeration of conflicting ideas, not harmony!

II. UNIQUE IN ITS TRANSLATION AND CIRCULATION

A. THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE...

1. One of the first major books translated
 - a. E.g., the Septuagint version of the OT
 - b. Translated into Greek in 250 B.C.
2. Between 1950-1960, 3000 Bible translators were at work

-- "By the end of 1993, the whole Bible had been translated into 337 languages; 2,062 languages have translations of at least one book of the Bible." - Guinness Book of World Records (1998)

B. THE CIRCULATION OF THE BIBLE...

1. As of 1804 - 409 million copies
2. As of 1932 - one and a third billion copies

-- "The world's best-selling and most widely distributed book is the Bible, with an estimated 2.5 billion copies sold, 1815 - 1975." - Guinness Book of World Records

"No other book has known the anything approaching this constant circulation" (The Cambridge History of the Bible).

III. UNIQUE IN ITS SURVIVAL

A. ITS SURVIVAL THROUGH TIME...

1. Though written on material that perishes...
 - a. ...having to be copied and recopied for hundreds of years by hand
 - b. ...its style, correctness, or existence did not diminish
2. Compared with other ancient writings, the manuscript evidence of the Bible:

- a. Is greater than any 10 pieces of classical literature combined!
- b. Is sufficient to ensure that we are reading the words of the original

B. ITS SURVIVAL THROUGH PERSECUTION...

1. Many have tried to burn it, ban it, and otherwise outlaw it
 - a. From the days of Roman emperors
 - b. To the present Communist-dominated countries
2. **Two illustrations** of its survival through persecution:
 - a. In 303 A.D., the Roman emperor Diocletian issued an edict to stop Christians from worshipping, and to destroy their scriptures. Only 25 years later the Roman emperor Constantine called for 50 copies of the Bible to be prepared at the expense of the government!
 - b. Voltaire, French atheist who died in 1778, predicted that Christianity would be swept from existence and pass into history within 100 years of his time. 50 years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society used his printing press and house to produce stacks of Bibles!

-- How true is the statement: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever." - cf. 1 Pe 1:24-25

C. ITS SURVIVAL THROUGH CRITICISM...

“Infidels for 1800 years have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. Its circulation increases, and it is more loved and cherished and read today than ever before. Infidels, with all their assault make about as much impression on this book as a man with a tack hammer on the pyramids of Egypt.”

“No other book has been so chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. What book on philosophy or religion or psychology...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 tenet? And yet, the Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions, and studied by millions.” - - **H. L. Hastings**

IV. UNIQUE IN ITS TEACHING

A. A BOOK OF PROPHECY...

1. “It is the only volume ever produced in which is to be found a large body of prophecies relating to individual nations (more than ten in Isaiah

alone), Israel, all the peoples of the earth, certain cities, the coming Messiah and His kingdom.” - **Wilbur Smith**

2. There is no other book of religious antiquity which provides so many explicit prophecies:

- a. So distant in the future
- b. Which came to pass

B. A BOOK OF HISTORY...

1. The Old Testament “embodies the oldest history writing extant”
(**Cambridge Ancient History**)

2. The Hebrews are the only race of people that can give such a clear and accurate picture of their origins

3. “...in all of my archaeological investigation I have never found one artifact of antiquity that contradicts any statement of the Word of God.” - **Nelson Glueck**

C. A BOOK OF PERSONALITIES...

1. The Bible deals frankly with the sins of its characters, even its heroes:

- a. Adam and Eve - putting off responsibility on to others
- b. Noah - drunkenness
- c. Abraham - cowardice, lying to save his skin
- d. Moses - disobedience to God
- e. David - lying, adultery, murder
- f. Peter - denying the Lord, causing division through hypocrisy
- g. Churches - divided, arrogant, materialistic

2. The Bible has the habit of telling it like it was, and is unique in its portrayal of its key personalities

V. UNIQUE IN ITS INFLUENCE

A. UPON THE LITERATURE OF THE WORLD...

1. “If every Bible in any considerable city were destroyed, the book could be restored in all its essential parts from the quotations on the shelves of the city public library” (**The Greatest English Classic**)

2. No one can truly be called “educated” who is ignorant of the Bible, for they would be ignorant of that which has influenced so many great writers

B. UPON THE WORLD ITSELF...

1. Written in the ancient East, but is the basis for the modern West

2. Our judicial system is based upon many of the principles found in the Bible

3. Our standards of morality owe much to the Judeo-Christian ethic
4. Even within the ancient characters of the Chinese language, are references to the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, the garden, and the Flood

Note: Much of the material for this lesson was taken from “**Evidence That Demands A Verdict**”, Vol. 1, by Josh McDowell.