

Is the Bible God's Word?

The Bible claims to be inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). The Greek phrase translated “inspired by God” literally means “God-breathed.” Great secular writers, such as Leo Tolstoy, have been “inspired” by a variety of stimuli—including principles and events—but the Bible asserts that *God Himself* is its source of inspiration. Peter, an apostle and author of several New Testament books, wrote that biblical prophecies were not the result of “an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21).

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce you to this inspired Book. A few proofs of the Bible’s divine origin will be included, but the primary aim of this chapter is to create an interest in this amazing volume—to encourage you to read it for yourself. As you read the Bible and follow its precepts (James 1:21–25), you will begin to understand why this remarkable Book has had such an impact on people through the ages.

This chapter features what one writer called “Seven Wonders of the Wonderful Word”: the wonders of its antiquity, modernity, diversity, unity, theme, influence, and comfort. Other marvels of the Bible could be mentioned, such as its historical and geographical accuracy and its impartiality, but these seven are sufficient to cause us to exclaim with one of the writers of the Book of Psalms, “Your testimonies are wonderful”! (Psalm 119:129a).

ITS ANTIQUITY

The Bible is one of the oldest books in all the world! Books generally do not have the opportunity to become very old. They are so fragile. Fire consumes them, and water dissolves them. Insects eat them, and careless fingers tear them.

The Bible, in its completed form, is almost two thousand years old. Parts of it are fully twice that old. No other book in the world can be compared with this! The age of the Bible reveals its endurance and indestructibility.

The most ancient writings are in the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They were written by Moses and contain the account of the beginning of man and the beginning days of recorded time. It can be safely said that these writings have come from the *oldest complete manuscripts in the possession of man today!*

The Bible has reached this ancient age in spite of man’s frequent and continued efforts to destroy it! Again and again, the most powerful governments that the earth has known have sought to eradicate this Book. Men have died on the gallows for reading it and have been burned at the stake for owning it.

Tortures too fiendish to describe have been visited upon people for studying its pages—yet there are more Bibles on the earth today than there are copies of any other book ever written!

At the end of the third century, the Roman Emperor Diocletian decreed death for any person who owned a copy of the Bible. He also condemned to death the members of a prisoner's household—for not reporting his disobedience. In this way, the mighty Roman ruthlessly set out to remove the writings which condemned his own vicious life and tyranny. After two years, Diocletian boasted, "I have completely exterminated the Christian writings from the face of the earth."

A century later, another Roman emperor, Constantine, was impressed by Christianity and desired to have copies of the New Testament made for all of the churches of his empire. He offered a substantial reward to anyone who could discover and deliver to his officers a copy of God's Word. Within twenty-four hours, fifty copies of the Scriptures were offered to the emperor—in spite of the fact that Diocletian thought he had destroyed them all!

Though written upon perishable materials in ink that is quick to fade—defying the ravages of time, the forces of nature, and the destructive conspiracies of man—the Bible has survived to our present century. Only God's providence can account for its long and fabulous history.

ITS MODERNITY

As ancient as it is, the Bible is also a modern book in many respects. We do not expect old books to be up-to-date in their teachings. A ten-year-old science

textbook is obsolete. One a century old is a curiosity. The medical information given in *Salmon's Embryology*, printed in the year 1700, would send a modern doctor into hysterical laughter. The *Pharmacopia Londensis* of 1600 seems even more ridiculous; if a physician were to practice medicine in accordance with that famous text, those who regulate medical practices would put him in jail!

To illustrate how even a few years can make a difference, here is a statement from a textbook on botany that is about 150 years old:

In Italy there groweth an herb . . . which hath a blossom of pure white possessing a rare fragrance, yet withal hath this strange property: the blossoms, placed under damp stones and suffered there to remain, in ten days transform themselves into venomous scorpions, the bite of which is death.

You may say, "Be fair. After all, we have learned a great deal in the last century and a half. You cannot expect old books to be up-to-date." That is the point! Moses, for instance, wrote 3,500 years ago, yet you will not find his writings contradicting modern science and knowledge. Entire books have been written on "the scientific foreknowledge of the Bible," stressing that modern facts of astronomy and cosmology and other scientific fields can be found in the pages of the Bible. Facts such as these are included:

The earth is round (Isaiah 40:22; Proverbs 8:27).

The earth is suspended in space (Job 26:7).

Space is too large to be measured or the stars counted (Genesis 15:5; Jeremiah 33:22).

The oceans have natural lanes in them (which are used for shipping to this day) (Psalm 8:8).

These volumes do not assert that the Bible is a scientific treatise. Rather, they stress that, when Bible writers touched on themes relating to science, unlike other writers of their day, they did not contradict scientific fact.

The most fascinating illustrations of the timeless quality of the Bible are in the area of medicine. Written in a world that knew nothing of modern hygiene or health practices, the law given to Moses as recorded in the Old Testament is filled with instructions about cleanliness, sanitation, quarantine, and other methods for preventing and controlling disease.

For example, it is standard procedure for a surgeon to wear a mask as he operates. Also, when one goes into the room of someone who is especially susceptible to disease, he wears a mask. Why? Because he does not want to spread germs. More than three thousand years before germs were discovered by scientists, God had Moses give these instructions: "And the leper in whom the plague is . . . he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean" (Leviticus 13:45; KJV).

Another medical advancement is the blood transfusion. Years ago, it was considered sound medical practice to "bleed" people; many literally were bled to death. Today, however, it is understood that the blood is the lifestream of the body. Turn now to Moses' statement in Genesis 9:4: "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its *blood*." (Emphasis mine.) In other words, Moses said: The *life* of the flesh is in the *blood* (see also Leviticus 17:11–14).

Books have been dedicated to the medical accuracy of the Bible. These cover a wide range of medical practices. Here is a sample:

Both men and women contain the “seed” of life
(Genesis 3:15; 22:18).

It is wise to decontaminate yourself and your clothing after coming in contact with possibly diseased men or animals (Numbers 19:5–22).

Eating an animal that died naturally is dangerous
(Leviticus 17:15).

Isn't that amazing? The oldest volume in our possession is as modern as twenty-first-century medical concepts!

The modernity of the Bible can be illustrated with all of its varied subjects. Can anyone claim that the world has matured beyond the ethical standards of this Book? Have we found any superior knowledge that leaves its precepts behind? No! Modern man has not begun to pass the wisdom of the Bible; if the world continues to exist for another thousand years, God's Word will be just as up-to-date in the thirty-first century as it is in the twenty-first!

ITS DIVERSITY

All that we have said to this point would be sufficiently amazing if the Bible were just one book, dealing with one subject. However, that is not the case.

The Bible is one of the most diverse books in the world. First, it is in reality two volumes—the Old Testament and the New Testament—separated from each other by some four or five centuries. Second,

each one of these volumes is further divided into a number of books—thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament, making a total of sixty-six. Third, these sixty-six books were written by more than forty different writers. Fourth, these forty-plus men lived over a span of almost two thousand years! Finally, these authors wrote on every subject known to literature—plus one. The “plus one” is a subject no other book contains: true *prophecy*. This is God’s realm alone! Hundreds of prophetic statements in the Bible have come to pass perfectly and accurately. Space will permit only a few examples:

Prophecies of Nations: Numerous prophecies were given regarding the rise, decline, and fall of nations. For instance, Israel’s history is vividly portrayed in Deuteronomy 28:47–68. Prophecies were also given concerning many other nations, including Assyria (see Isaiah 10:12, 24, 25; 2 Kings 17:24; 18:13) and Babylon (see Isaiah 13; Daniel 5:28).

Prophecies of People: The work of King Josiah was foretold more than three hundred years before he was born (1 Kings 13:2; 2 Kings 23:15, 16), as was the reign of Cyrus of Persia (see Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). The amazing story of Sennacherib’s inability to capture Jerusalem is also worth mentioning (see 2 Kings 19:32–35).

Prophecies of Christ: Of the approximately eight hundred prophecies in the Old Testament, over three hundred are centered in the person of Jesus Christ. Chapter 4 of this book lists many of these prophecies and their fulfillment.

The diversity of the Bible proves that it is from God. This is especially true because in that diversity we find unity. No part of human life and spirituality is overlooked in this Book of all books. It touches all the phases of human existence in principle and in divine guidance.

ITS UNITY

If the Bible were one book, written by a single author, we would naturally expect all of its parts to harmonize. Even if it were one book written by forty-plus men on one subject, the chances of complete agreement would be very slight. Therefore, to claim that forty-plus men wrote sixty-six books on so many different subjects, and that their words are in perfect agreement, leaves the mind stunned. One might say, "They must have worked together very closely and carefully to achieve so remarkable a work!" History proves that they could not have. Most of these men never saw each other. They were separated by centuries and had no opportunity to plan or revise their writings. The harmony must be explained in some other way.

The fact cannot be denied: Complete unity exists between all of the parts and writers of the Scriptures. Men have tried but failed to find even a single disagreement in the writings. The Bible is one book, a unified whole.

Consider, for instance, its two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Though they represent two separate covenants (or agreements) for two separate groups of people, they are tied together beautifully. Someone has said, "The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, and the New

Testament is the Old Testament revealed." The Old Testament is the *root*, and the New Testament is the *fruit*.

Let us note a few contrasts between the *first* book of the Bible and the *last* book of the Bible:

(1) Genesis begins with the creation of the heavens and the earth; Revelation ends with the creation of the new heavens and the new earth.

(2) Genesis relates the coming of light and the creation of the sun and moon; Revelation tells of the end of their service to man—for in the New City (heaven), God and the Lamb (Jesus) are the light.

(3) In Genesis, man meets Satan and suffers defeat. In Revelation, another battle is fought; this time, Satan loses and, through Jesus, man is the victor.

(4) In Genesis, man is cast out of the Garden of Eden, where the first man and woman lived; in Revelation, he is reinstated with God.

(5) Finally, Genesis tells how man loses the privilege of eating of the Tree of Life—lest sin be made immortal. In Revelation, with sin destroyed, man is invited to eat of the Tree of Life so that he may live forever!

Yes, the unity of the book is marvelous. When we look at that unity, we stand amazed and conclude that God is the Author of it.

ITS THEME

The unity of the Bible is possible only if *one Mind* supervised the compilation of its contents. Since no human author could have lived over the fifteen-plus centuries which elapsed during this period of literary activity, only God can properly be called the Author

of the Book. This was what Peter had in mind when he said, “Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21b).

Again, to have unity, not only was one author necessary, but also *one theme* was needed—in order that the whole might be drawn together. What is the theme of this Book? It is not “The Story of Mankind,” although mankind provides the reason for the theme. It is not “The Story of the Jews,” although they figure prominently in the working out of the theme. The theme of the book is “The Story of a Man,” *one Man—Jesus Christ*.

It has been well said that the Bible revolves around the Coming One. The message of the Old Testament is “He is *coming*.” The message of the Gospel Accounts is “He is *here*.” The message of the rest of the New Testament is “He is *coming again*.”

An interesting study can be made of each book of the Bible from the standpoint of how it reveals Jesus. Books could be written on “Jesus in Genesis,” “Jesus in Exodus,” “Jesus in Leviticus,” and so forth. For instance:

Jesus is in Genesis 1, for “All things came into being through Him” (John 1:3a).

Jesus is in Genesis 3, for it is He who would later be “her [the woman’s] seed” and would bruise the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 3:16).

Jesus is in Genesis 4, as He is foreshadowed in the sacrifice of Abel’s lamb. (See Hebrews 12:24.)

Jesus is also in Genesis 6, for the salvation in the ark is a type [symbol] of the salvation to be found in and through Him. On and on we could go.

This, then, is the theme that gives the Word its wonderful unity: *Jesus Christ*. Jesus—the Redeemer

who was to come, the Savior who did come, and the King who will come again—binds the words of the sixty-six books into one unified document.

ITS INFLUENCE

Of all the writings in the earth's libraries, the Bible has exerted the most potent influence on mankind. It has changed the flow of history, erected empires, cast down conquerors and kings. It has brought blessings and success to those who have obeyed its precepts, and it has brought death and destruction to those who have fought against it. The powers of the Bible are many and varied, but let us notice especially its power to change lives and to uplift men.

A man by the name of John G. Paton wanted to go to the New Hebrides Islands as a missionary. At first the British government refused to let him go. They said the tribesmen were savage cannibals who ate friends as well as enemies. But Paton persisted, and finally they gave in. In 1858, a British ship landed John and his wife on the island. An armed guard stood by while the crew built the missionaries a house in which to dwell. Then they sailed away, convinced they would never see the couple again.

The people with whom the Patons worked were brutal and cruel. Within a few years, Mrs. Paton died of a tropical disease. John had to lie upon her grave for ten days and nights, mustket in hand, to keep the natives from digging up her body and eating it. But he stayed on the island for thirty years and taught them the Word. At the end of the time, the British government published an official document saying that the former cannibals of the New Hebrides had

become the most advanced and cultured of all the native tribes that lived under the British flag!

Wherever the Bible has gone, mankind has been made better. The Bible itself abounds with stories of changed lives. A dishonest tax collector became honest and generous (Luke 19:1–9). A murdering blasphemer developed into a great apostle (Acts 7:58; 8:1, 3; 22:4–21). Many other examples are given.

What God has done through the power of the Bible for others, He can do in your life. If you will read and live His Word, He will change you into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

ITS COMFORT

In granting comfort, as in every other field of service to man, the Bible is unique, unprecedented, and unparalleled! There has never been and never will be any other trustworthy light that can enable man to see beyond the grave. The Scriptures offer the reader hope and assurance for his own eternity, and they bring comfort to his heart when a loved one is taken away by death.

Death is an enemy. All the poetry and philosophy of man's devising can never change that grim and somber fact. Of course, to the Christian, it is an enemy whose defeat has been predetermined. By the power of Christ, death is forced to serve as an usher to introduce the redeemed into the presence of the Lord. Nevertheless, it remains *an enemy*! This enemy enters palaces and huts alike. It separates a husband from his wife. It tears the little baby from its mother's arms. It turns sweet happiness into dark despair.

When a loved one dies, people will request, "Say some words that will comfort us." Where shall those

words come from? From literature? From a poet? From a philosopher? Search all your great books, and you will not find a line penned by mortal man that can bring lasting comfort and hope when death strikes your home. Only one source offers words of strength and comfort: the Bible. You can read words like these from God's book:

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me (Psalm 23:4).

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

. . . But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:20–54).

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:17, 18).

And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away (Revelation 21:4).

Through the ages, these words—and others like them in the Bible—have dried tears, given hope, and brought comfort to literally millions. Indeed, it is a wonderful book!

CONCLUSION

We have considered seven wonders of the Bible: It is old, but ever new! It is diverse, but with a perfect unity—a unity centered in Jesus! It is powerful in its influence, but tender in its comfort! The Bible is the inspired Word of God; there is no other adequate explanation.

STUDY QUESTIONS

(answers on page 259)

1. What does “inspired by God” mean as used in 2 Timothy 3:16?
2. The Roman emperor Diocletian tried to eliminate the Bible and its message. Did he succeed?
3. How does Leviticus 13:45 show the Bible’s relevance?
4. How do the differences within the Bible prove that it is from God?
5. What is the theme of the Bible?
6. Of all the writings in the earth’s libraries, which book has exerted the most influence?
7. What comfort does the Bible offer its reader?
8. List seven wonders of the Bible that prove that it is the inspired Word of God.

WORD HELPS

Scriptures—the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament was God’s law for Jews and led the way for the New Testament (Galatians 3:24), which is for all people to follow today. It contains a summary of God’s creation of the world, the laws given to His chosen people Israel, inspired poetry, and the teachings of God through His prophets.