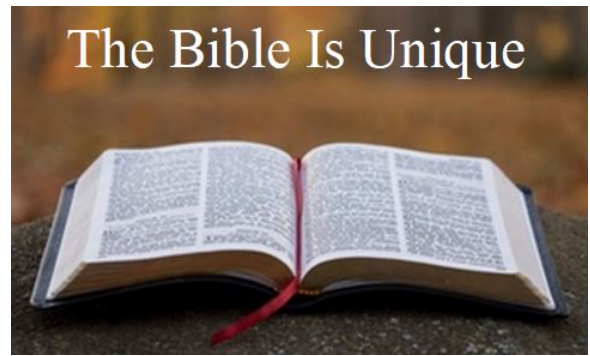


## THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE

### Introduction

1. There are three basic views of the Bible: (i) It is the inspired word of God, (ii) It is a classic work of literature, and (iii) It is a book as much full of nonsense as it is wisdom. There are also those full of blind and ignorant hatred of God and His word that simply deride and mock everything in it.
2. The more people to whom we talk about the Bible, the more likely we are to encounter those that express views that are contrary to our own concerning its origin and nature. We may only have one opportunity to defend our position and so it is essential to have something committed to memory ready to present (cp. 1 Peter 3:15).
3. In this lesson we shall consider five properties of the Bible that reveal its uniqueness.



### I. UNIQUE IN ITS CONTINUITY

The Bible is a collection of books written by various authors over hundreds of years, and yet there is harmony and continuity in its content.

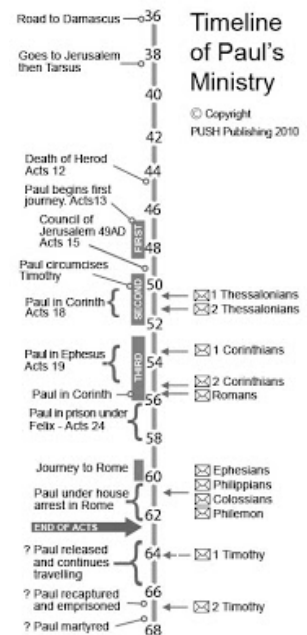
#### A. The Bible was written over a period of about 1600 years...

1. ... by approximately 40 authors from various walks of life. For example:

- ☞ Moses was a political leader trained in the universities of Egypt (Acts 7:20-36).
- ☞ Joshua was a military general (Joshua 1:1-9).
- ☞ Amos was a herdsman (Amos 1:1).
- ☞ Nehemiah was cup bearer to the king of Persia (Nehemiah 1:11).
- ☞ Daniel was Prime Minister in the courts of Babylon (Daniel 2:46-49).
- ☞ Solomon was a philosopher and the king of Israel (1 Kings 2:12).
- ☞ Matthew was a tax collector (Matthew 10:3).
- ☞ Luke was a physician (Colossians 4:14).
- ☞ Peter was a fisherman (Matthew 4:18).
- ☞ Paul was a rabbi and tentmaker (Acts 18:1-3).

2. ... in different places. For example:

- ☞ Moses wrote the Pentateuch (1405 B.C.) - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. He was raised in Egypt and served under Pharaoh. He was a scholar, a politician, and military leader. He later become the deliverer of God's people, Israel. The Pentateuch was written by him at Mount Sinai and in the wilderness (Exodus 24:1-4).
- ☞ Jeremiah wrote Jeremiah and Lamentations (570 B.C.). They were written in Jerusalem and Babylon (Jeremiah 32:2; 33:1; 36:1-3).
- ☞ Daniel wrote the book of Daniel (530 B.C.) in Babylon (Daniel 1:1-7).
- ☞ Paul was an evangelist and wrote from various cities in the Roman Empire; sometimes from prison (Philippians 1:12-13). The timeline chart opposite shows when and where Paul wrote his epistles.
- ☞ Luke while traveling.



- ☞ John in exile on the isle of Patmos (**Revelation 1:9**).
  - ☞ Others in the rigors of a military campaign.
3. ... at different times. For example:
- ☞ David in times of war.
  - ☞ Solomon in times of peace.
4. ... during different moods. For example:
- ☞ Some writing from the heights of joy. “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs” (**Psalms 100:1-2**); “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy” (**Psalms 30:11**); “In your presences is fullness of joy; in your right hand there are pleasures forever” (**Psalms 16:11**); “Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart” (**Psalms 37:4**); “Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King... for the Lord takes delight in his people” (**Psalms 149:2, 4**); “Let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy” (**Psalms 5:11**); “May the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful” (**Psalms 68:3**); “Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days” (**Psalms 90:14**); “Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy” (**Psalms 107:22**); “May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you” (**Psalms 70:4**); “The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy” (**Psalms 126:3**); “Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: ‘The Lord’s right hand has done mighty things” (**Psalms 118:15**); “You make me glad by your deeds, O Lord; I sing for joy at the works of your hands” (**Psalms 92:4**).
  - ☞ Others from the depths of sorrow and despair (e.g., Jeremiah wrote Lamentations).
5. ... In three languages:
- ☞ Hebrew.
  - ☞ Aramaic. The portions of Scripture that were written in Aramaic include Ezra 4:8–6:18 and 7:12-26 (67 verses), Daniel 2:4b–7:28 (200 verses), Jeremiah 10:11, and various proper names and single words and phrases scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments.
  - ☞ Greek.
6. ... with subject matter involving hundreds of controversial topics For example:
- ☞ The origin of man and the universe (**Genesis 1:1-31**).
  - ☞ The nature of God. The following verses speak to the nature of God: Genesis 1:26-27; John 4:24; John 1:1-4; John 14:6-11; John 1:18; John 17:3; 1 John 3:1-2; John 17:20-24; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 11:27; John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 1:15-16; John 6:44; John 17:5; Romans 1:18-20; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:14-15; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:1-3; Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 40:18; John 5:18; John 5:37; John 8:58; John 14:28; John 20:17; Romans 8:9; Romans 8:14; 1 Corinthians 15:27-28; 1 Corinthians 15:49; Ephesians 4:13; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:47; Ephesians 4:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Exodus 33:18-19; Psalm 139:7-10; Isaiah 6:3-5; Matthew 16:15-17; Matthew 17:5; John 3:31; John 5:30; John 6:38; John 6:46; John 8:28; John 10:30; John 14:17; Acts 17:29; 1 Corinthians 6:17; 2 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:2; Ephesians 5:5; Philippians 3:21; Colossians 1:2; Colossians 1:12-13; Colossians 1:18; Colossians 1:27; Colossians 3:1; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 7:3; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:2-4; 1 John 1:3.
  - ☞ The nature of man, sin, and man's redemption. (i) Man is created in God's image (**Genesis 1:26-27; 2:21-23; Psalm 100:3**), and made upright (**Ecclesiastes 7:29**); (ii) Man is a fallen creature. The first two chapters of Genesis portray man as a creature of sinless perfection. After the fall in Genesis three, man is viewed as one who has sinned and thus has come short of Jehovah's glory (**Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 3:9, 23; 1 John 1:8-10**); (iii) Man is a dual or triune being (**Matthew 10:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12; James 2:26**).

B. We would not expect such a collection of books to evidence harmony and continuity:

1. But the Bible does indeed evidence a perfect harmony and continuity. For example: “The paradise lost of the book of Genesis becomes the paradise regained of Revelation” and “Whereas the gate to the Tree of Life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation” (Geisler and Nix).
2. Compare the continuity of the Bible with any other writings of men. If we took just ten authors from one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language, and speaking on just one controversial subject, then you would have a conglomeration of conflicting ideas, not harmony!

## II. UNIQUE IN ITS TRANSLATION AND CIRCULATION

“No other book has known anything approaching this constant circulation” (The Cambridge History of the Bible). You would think that if a person were sincerely seeking truth that they would give serious consideration to a book that has drawn so much attention.

A. The translation of the Bible.

1. The Bible was one of the first major books translated. For example, the Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures completed in 250 B.C.
2. Between 1950-1960, 3000 Bible translators were at work, and “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.

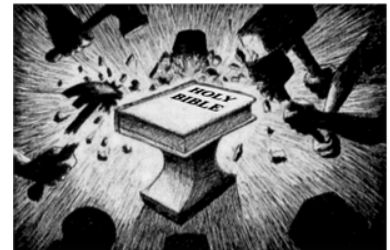
1. As of 1804 there were 409 million copies.
2. As of 1932 there were one and a third billion copies.
3. “The world’s best-selling and most widely distributed book is the Bible, with an estimated 2.5 billion copies sold, 1815-1975” (Guinness Book of World Records).

## III. UNIQUE IN ITS SURVIVAL

Despite many attempts to eradicate the Bible throughout the centuries, it has survived.

A. The Bible’s survival through time.

1. Though scriptures were written on material that perishes, which meant it was necessary to keep making new copies. Despite hundreds of years of copying, its style, correctness, and very existence did not diminish.
2. Compared with other ancient writings, the manuscript evidence of the Bible is greater than any 10 pieces of classical literature combined! It is sufficient to ensure that we are reading the words of the original.



B. The Bible’s survival through persecution.

1. From the days of Roman emperors to the present Communist-dominated countries, attempts have been made to outlaw and destroy the Bible.
2. Here are two illustrations of its survival through persecution:
  - a. In A.D. 303, the Roman Emperor Diocletian issued an edict to stop Christians from worshipping, and to destroy their scriptures. Just twenty-five years later the Roman emperor Constantine called for 50 copies of the Bible to be prepared at the expense of the government!
  - b. The French atheist Voltaire, who died in 1778, predicted that Christianity would be swept from existence and pass into history within 100 years of his time. Fifty years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society used his printing press and house to produce Bibles!
3. 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 Yahweh endures forever” (cp. 1 Peter 1:24-25).

### C. The Bible's survival through criticism.

1. "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" (H. L. Hastings).
2. "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" (Bernard Ramm).

## IV. UNIQUE IN ITS TEACHING

The Bible presents many prophecies that were fulfilled, history that can be verified, and personalities with all their flaws.

### 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, future prophecies that have come to pass. For example:
  - a. Cyrus is a king mentioned more than 30 times in the Bible and is identified as Cyrus the Great (also Cyrus II or Cyrus the Elder) who reigned over Persia between 539-530 B.C. This pagan king is important in Jewish history because it was under his rule that Jews were first allowed to return to Israel after 70 years of captivity (**Jeremiah 25:12; Ezra 1:1-11**). In one of the most amazing prophecies of the Bible, Isaiah predicts Cyrus' decree to free the Jews. One hundred fifty years before Cyrus lived, the prophet calls him by name and gives details of Cyrus' benevolence to the Jews (**Isaiah 45:1, 4**).
  - b. The prophet Daniel interpreted two sets of dreams, one by a pagan ruler, Nebuchadnezzar (**Daniel 2:1-49**) and the other by the prophet himself (**Daniel 7:1-28**), thereby forecasting the entire course of Middle East history over the next five centuries. Daniel predicts the rise and fall of four great empires: Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greece, and Roman. He even foresaw the meteoric rise to power of the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great, as well as the final division of his Greek empire by four of his surviving generals (**Daniel 7:6, 8:5-8, 11:2-4**).
  - c. In 586 B.C. Ezekiel prophesied that the city of Tyre would be destroyed and never be rebuilt (Ezekiel 26:1-21). In 332 B.C. This prophesy was fulfilled.  
See "Tyre In Prophecy" <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=13&article=1790>

### 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 – their disobedience to God's command (**Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-6**).
  - b. Noah – drunkenness (**Genesis 9:20-21**).
  - c. Abraham - cowardice, lying to save his skin (**Genesis 12:11-13**).

- d. Moses - disobedience to God (**Numbers 20:1-13**).
- e. David - lying, adultery, murder (**2 Samuel 11:1-27**).
- f. Peter - denying the Lord (**Matthew 26:69-75**), causing division through hypocrisy (**Galatians 2:11-13**).
- g. Churches - divided, arrogant, materialistic (read 1 Corinthians).

2. The Bible tells us like it was, and is unique in its portrayal of its key personalities.

## V. UNIQUE IN ITS INFLUENCE

The Bible has had an influence on literature and art, and on the world itself.

A. The Bible has influenced 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" that is ignorant of the Bible, for they would be ignorant of that which has influenced so many great writers.

B. The Bible has influenced the world:

- 1. Our judicial system is based upon many of the principles found in the Bible.
- 2. Our standards of morality owe much to the Judeo-Christian ethic.
- 3. Even within the ancient characters of the Chinese language, are references to the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, the garden, and the Flood.

## Conclusion

- 1. All of this is not offered to prove the Bible to be the Word of God, though its continuity and fulfilled prophecy are certainly evidences of it, rather that it is truly a unique book ("different from all others; having no like or equal").
- 2. Of course, I believe that what makes it unique is its origin - it comes from the mind of the One True God; its process of revelation - it came by the work of the Holy Spirit, who guided the many writers and made their works harmonious; and its central message - that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God who is the only Lord and Savior of mankind.
- 3. Because of its uniqueness, I believe it may be rightly stated: "If you are an intelligent person, you will read the one book that has drawn more attention than any other, IF you are searching for the truth."
- 4. While the Bible is indeed unique, it is of little value unless we receive it in our hearts and work it out in our lives:

"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (**James 1:21-25**).

- 5. May we never neglect this unique Book, but receive it into our hearts and lives the way God intended!

This lesson is based on sermon outline of the same title by Mark Copeland. Mark includes this note at the end of the lesson "Note: much of the material for this lesson was taken from "Evidence That Demands A Verdict", Vol. 1, by Josh McDowell."

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