

Lesson 1b

The Uniqueness of the Bible

Some of the questions and comments Pastor Hein raised in Lesson 1 are worth a more in-depth look, and that is the purpose of this supplemental lesson to Lesson 1.

On page 2 of Lesson 1, questions 6 & 7 touch upon a topic that really separates the Bible from all other works of antiquity and all other writings of different religious beliefs.

Question 6 asks, “According to the underlined portions of those passages what must we say about the Scripture?” and the answer was that it’s the truth.

Question 7 asks, “Since that is the case, which of the following could the Bible contain—lies, contradictions, or mistakes?”

In many ways, the Bible is unique among all literary works throughout world history. Consider this quote:

The unity and continuity of the Bible, its circulation, the history of its translation, its preservation, its accuracy of prophecy, and in particular its impact and power in human hearts and lives all bear witness to one great truth: the Bible is UNIQUE and UNPARALLELED in the history of writing. This fact, worthy of more in-depth study, is stated to demonstrate that a trust in what the Bible says is not irrational or the result of any “blind faith.” Christian faith is based on fact.

In this lesson, we are going to take a more in-depth at each of the italicized portions of this quote as we find out just how unique the Bible is.

THE UNITY AND CONTINUITY OF THE BIBLE

“A representative of the *Great Books of the Western World* came to my house recruiting salesmen for their series. He spread out the chart of the *Great Books of the Western World* series. He spent five minutes talking to us about the *Great Books of the Western World* series and we spent an hour and a half talking to him about the Greatest Book.

I challenged him to take just 10 of the authors, all from one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language and just one controversial subject (the Bible speaks on hundreds with harmony and agreement). Then I asked him: “Would they (the authors) agree?” He paused and then replied, “No!” “What would you have?” I retorted. Immediately he said, “A conglomeration.”

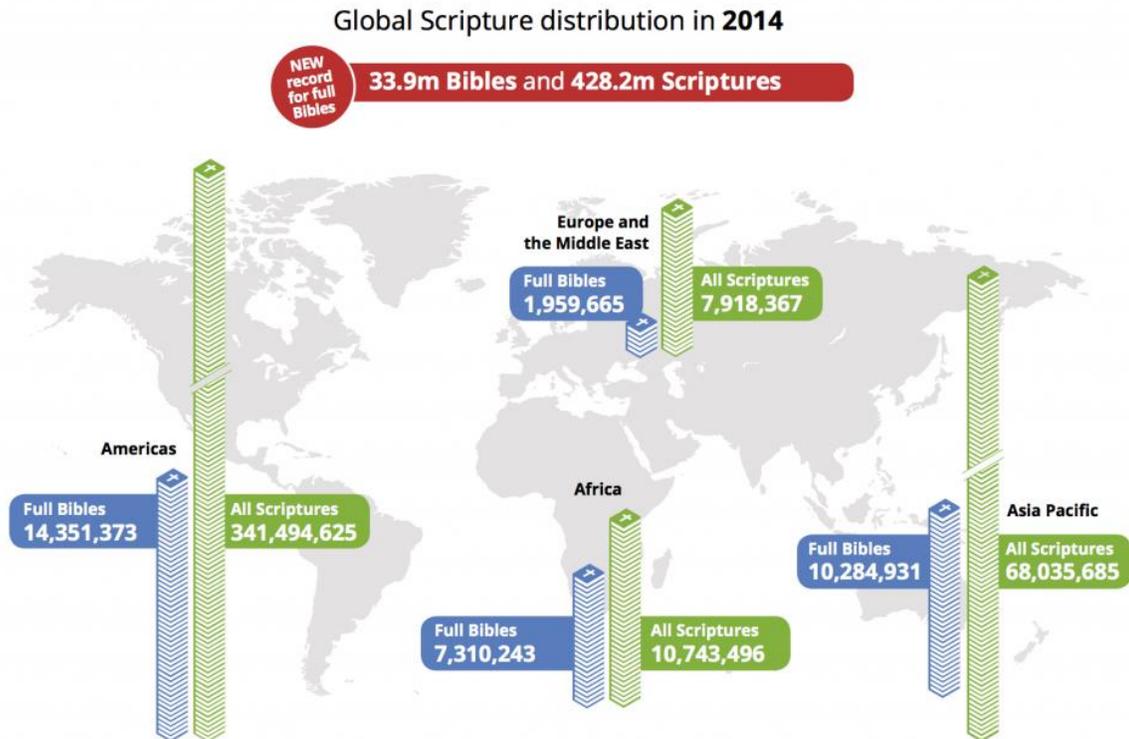
The Bible is a book that is...

1. Written over a 1,600 year span
2. Written over 60 generations
3. Written by 40 plus authors from every walk of life including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc.:
4. Written in different places
5. Written at different times:
6. Written during different moods:
7. Written on three continents:
8. Written in three languages:

Is there a more plausible explanation than that this came about by a divine plan?

THE BIBLE'S CIRCULATION AND THE HISTORY OF ITS TRANSLATION

No other piece of literature comes close to rivaling the Bible in its circulation and translation. As of 2017, the complete Bible has been translated into 670 languages (Wycliffe Global Alliance), with the New Testament available in 1,521 languages.



If we start with the assumption that God loves us and desires to be in a relationship with us, then it would make sense that he is going to ensure that his Word is widely communicated, and we even could say the most widely communicated.

THE BIBLE'S PRESERVATION

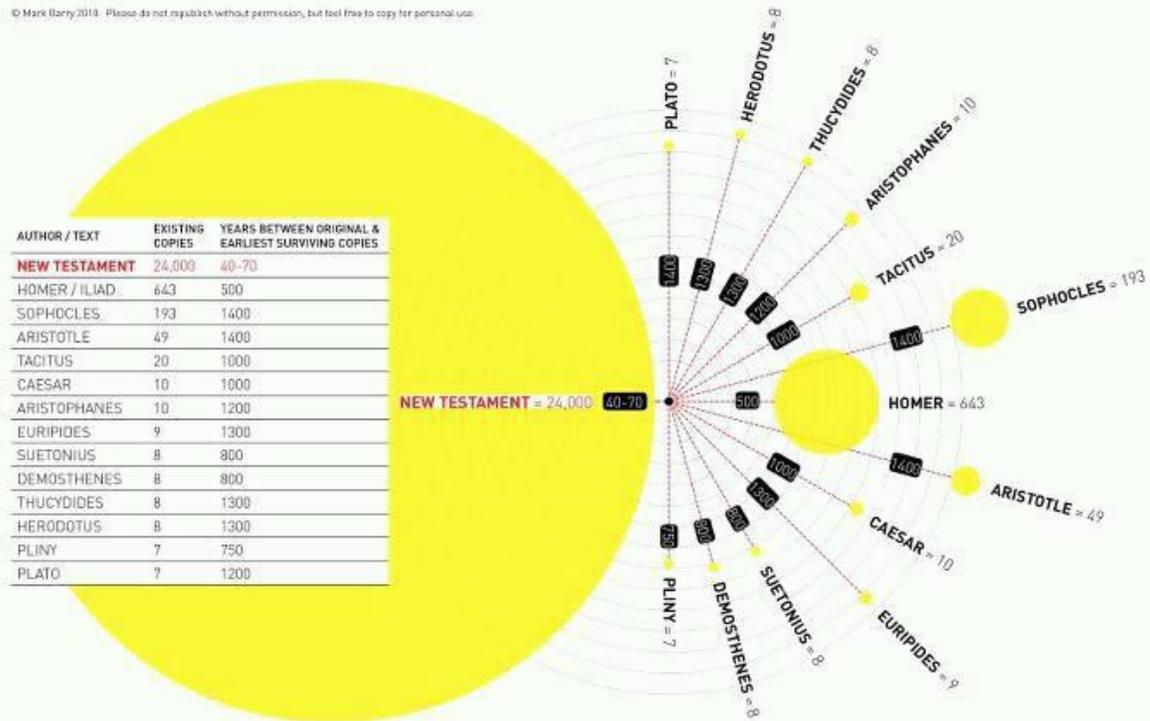
None of the differences in New Testament manuscripts affects one doctrine that hasn't been clearly settled by the rest of Scripture.

Of the 200,000 – 400,000 textual variants in the New Testament, the overwhelming majority of differences boil down to spelling mistakes and the addition/omission of a definite article (the), which are easily reconciled when compared to other manuscripts.

Scholars across the theological spectrum say that in all essentials—not in every particular, but in *all* essentials—our New Testament manuscripts go back to the originals.

THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT COMPARED TO OTHER ANCIENT TEXTS

© Mark Barry 2018. Please do not republish without permission, but feel free to copy for personal use.



This, in and of itself, does not prove divine authorship. It does, however, prove a faithful transmission. And if God wants his world shared with the world, it's reasonable to presume that he would make sure his word is well-preserved.

THE BIBLE'S ACCURACY OF PROPHECY

This one truly makes the Bible unique among all other literary works and does more to make its case for divine authorship than pretty much anything else.

The Bible's prophecies are always very specific in their detail.

The probability of just eight prophecies being fulfilled is one chance in one hundred million billion. That number is millions of times greater than the total number of people who've ever walked the planet. He calculated that if you took this number of silver dollars, they would cover the state of Texas to a depth of two feet. If you marked one silver dollar among them and then had a blindfolded person wander the whole state and bend down to pick up one coin, what would be the odds he'd choose the one that had been marked? There are no less than 48 specific prophecies about the person and work of the Messiah in the Old Testament, all of which were fulfilled by Jesus.

A Short List of Prophecies About Jesus Christ and their Fulfillment from 4004 BC to AD 33

| Prediction about Jesus | OT Prophecy | NT Fulfillment |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Seed of Abraham | Genesis 12:3 | Matthew 1:1 |
| Seed of a Woman | Genesis 3:15 | Galatians 4:4 |
| Seed of Isaac | Genesis 17:19 | Luke 3:34 |
| Seed of Jacob | Numbers 24:17 | Matthew 1:2 |
| Tribe of Judah | Genesis 49:10 | Matthew 1:2 |
| Heir to the Throne of David | Isaiah 9:7 | Luke 1:32-33 |
| Born in Bethlehem ("House of Bread") | Micah 5:2 | Luke 2:4-6 |
| Time of His Birth | Daniel 9:25 | Luke 2:1-2 |
| Born of a Virgin | Isaiah 7:14 | Luke 1:26-31 |
| Slaughter of the Innocents | Jeremiah 31:15 | Matthew 2:16-18 |
| Flight to Egypt | Hosea 11:1 | Matthew 2:14-15 |
| Preceded by a Forerunner | Malachi 3:1 | Luke 7:24, 27 |
| Declared the Son of God | Psalms 2:7 | Matthew 3:17 |
| Galilean Ministry | Isaiah 9:1-2 | Matthew 4:13-16 |
| A Prophet | Deuteronomy 18:15 | Acts 3:20-22 |
| To Heal the Brokenhearted | Isaiah 61:1-2 | Luke 4:18-19 |
| Rejected by His Own People, the Jews | Isaiah 53:3 | John 1:11 |
| Priest after the Order of Melchizedek | Psalms 110:4 | Hebrews 5:5-6 |
| Triumphal Entry into City of Jerusalem | Zechariah 9:9 | Mark 11:7-9 |
| Betrayed by a Friend | Psalms 41:9 | Luke 22:47-48 |
| Sold for Thirty Pieces of Silver | Zechariah 11:12 | Matthew 26:15 |
| Silent to Accusations | Isaiah 53:7 | Mark 15:4-5 |
| Accused by False Witnesses | Psalms 35:11 | Mark 14:55-64 |
| Spat upon and Smitten | Isaiah 50:6 | Matthew 26:67 |
| Hated without Reason | Psalms 35:19 | John 15:24-25 |
| Vicarious Sacrifice | Isaiah 53:5 | Romans 5:6-8 |
| Crucified with Malefactors | Isaiah 53:12 | Mark 15:27-28 |
| Pierced through Hands and Feet | Zechariah 12:10 | John 20:27 |
| Scorned and Mocked | Psalms 22:7-8 | Luke 23:35 |
| Given Vinegar and Gall | Psalms 69:21 | Matthew 27:34 |
| Prayed for His Enemies | Psalms 109:2-5 | Luke 23:34 |
| Soldiers Gambled for His Coat | Psalms 22:17-18 | Matthew 27:35-36 |
| No Bones Broken | Psalms 34:20 | John 19:32-36 |
| His Side Pierced | Zechariah 12:10 | John 19:34 |
| Buried with the Rich | Isaiah 53:9 | Matthew 27:57-60 |
| To Be Resurrected | Psalms 16:10, 49:15 | Mark 16:6-7 |
| His Death Announcement | Daniel 9:24 | Matthew 27:46 |
| His Ascension to God's Right Hand | Psalms 68:18 | Mark 16:19; 1Cor.15:4; Eph. 4:8 |