

THE AMAZING BIBLE

- √ The Bible is truly an amazing book – unlike any other. It demands our attention and our close inspection and READING and STUDY.
- √ It is a collection of 66 Books, written by 40 authors, covering some 1600 years (c.1500 B.C. to 100 A.D) and yet it is one book, both progressive in scope and unified in purpose. It is one book, one history, one story – HIS story! Amazing!
- √ The Bible is the best selling book of all time, regularly on most best-seller lists. Amazing!
- √ It was originally written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and (Koine) Greek. The entire Bible has now been translated into over 500 languages with 1275 New Testament translations and some 2800 language groups having access to at least one book. In comparison, the most popular books ranging from Shakespeare to Disney to Harry Potter have only been translated into an average of 50 languages. Amazing!
- √ The Bible has 2 major “sections” or “testaments”; “testament means “covenant” or “agreement.” The Old testament is the agreement God made with man about his salvation, before Christ came. The New Testament is the covenant God make with man about his salvation after Christ came. In a word – the Old Testament is the agreement of LAW, the New Testament of GRACE. Amazing!
- √ From Adam to Abraham we have the history of the human race From Abraham to Christ we have the history of the chosen race (the Jews) From Christ on we have the history of the Church. No other book has this scope – amazing!
- √ The Bible is written by God – the thought and revelation is divine. Yet it is written by men – the expression of the revelation is human. Amazing!
***2 Peter 1:20-21** But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*
- √ It's purpose is to teach, reprove, correct and train in the ways of God – that each might be
 - (1) taught the way of righteousness (how to be saved) and
 - (2) adequately equipped to do the good work of God (how to live). Amazing!***2 Timothy 3:16-17** All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*
- √ Unlike any other book every written, the Bible claims to be the Word of God – God's message to mankind. Over 3,000 times we read, “thus says the Lord” or something similar. The apostle Peter referred to Paul's writings as “Scripture.” (2 Peter 3:16) The New Testament has some 225 direct quotations from the Old Testament, and counting clear illusions, the N.T. refers to the O.T. over 1000 times. Some 10% of the N.T. refers back to the O.T. as “God's Word.” Amazing!

THE “CANON” OF SCRIPTURE

“Canon” of Scripture comes from the collection of writings accepted by the apostles and leadership of the early Church as a basis for Christian belief. “Canon” comes from the Greek word “Kanon” meaning “measuring rod.” Thus, to have the Bible “canonized” meant that it had been measured by the standard or test of divine inspiration and authority.

The Old Testament was canonized between 400 B.C. and 100 B.C. The 39 books of the Old Testament were all accepted by the apostles of the early Church.

The entire New Testament was canonized by the year 375 A.D.

No original manuscripts exist today, of either the Old or New Testament. Yet multiple copies with few discrepancies demonstrate the copyist’s attention to detail and God’s intention to preserve for us an accurate rendering of the original

Matthew 24:35 *[Jesus] Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*

SCIENTIFIC FACTS IN THE BIBLE (7 of many, many more)

(With thanks to “The Evidence Bible”)

1. Only in the last 100 years has science discovered that everything we see is composed of things invisible to the human eye, called atoms. And yet look at this scientific fact given in the New Testament:

Hebrews 11:3 *By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.*

2. Medical science has only recently discovered that blood clotting in a newborn reaches its peak on the eighth day, then drops. The Bible says that a baby must be circumcised on the eighth day – written around 1400 B.C.

Leviticus 12:3 *On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.*

3. At a time when it was believed that the earth sat on a giant or giant animal (c. 1500 B.C.) the Bible speaks in the book of Job about the earth floating in space.

Job 26:7 *[God] stretches out the north over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing.*

4. It was centuries after Christ that science learned that the earth was round. Yet hear the prophet Isaiah writing hundreds of years before Christ:

Isaiah 40:22 *It is he who sits above the circle of the earth. (the meaning is specifically “vault” implying not a flat disk, but a sphere)*

5. It wasn’t until 1864 that scientist James Clerk Maxwell suggested that electricity and light waves were two forms of the same thing. It is now commonly known that radio waves travel at the speed of light (thus we have instantaneous wireless communication with someone on the other side of the earth). Yet God told Job in 1500 B.C.:

Job 38:35 *“Can you send forth lightnings that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are?’”*

6. Scientists have discovered a continuous cycle of air currents that move over the face of the earth. Solomon described this some two thousand years before:

Ecclesiastes 1:6 *Blowing toward the south, then turning toward the north, the wind continues swirling along; and on its circular courses the wind returns.*

7. The biological truth concerning the importance of blood in our body’s mechanism has only been fully comprehended in recent years. Up until about the turn of the 20th century (1900) patients were often “bled” as a treatment for ailments, with many dying because of this practice. Yet 3000 years ago the Bible writes:

Leviticus 17:11 *For the life of the flesh is in the blood ...*

Proverbs 4:20-22 *My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.*

PROPHECIES FULFILLED (highlights of 1000's)

About Jesus' birth

Of the tribe of Judah (Micah 5:2, Matthew 1:1-3)

Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2-5, Matthew 2:1-6)

Of David's kingly lineage (Isaiah 9:7, Matthew 1:1)

Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14, Luke 1:26ff)

Kings to bring gifts and bow before Him (Psalm 72:10-11, Matthew 2:1-11)

About Jesus' Life & Ministry

Called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1, Matthew 2:13-15, 19-21)

Rejected by his brothers (Psalm 69:8, John 7:3-5)

Rulers plotted against (Psalm 2:1-2, Matthew 12:14; 26:3-4)

A light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6, Luke 2:25-32)

Into Jerusalem riding a donkey (Zechariah 9:9, Mark 11:1-10)

Jesus' Death

No bones broken (Psalm 34:20, John 19:31-36)

Hung on a tree as a curse (Deuteronomy 21:23, Galatians 3:13)

Thirsty during execution (Psalm 22:15, John 19:28)

Accused by false witnesses (Psalm 27:12, Matthew 26:60)

Hands and feet pierced (Psalm 22:16, Zechariah 12:10, Matthew 27:35)

Soldiers cast lots for clothing (Psalm 22:18, John 10:23-24)

PSALM 119

God has given us an entire chapter of His Holy Word on the subject of the Bible.

It is significant that Psalm 119 is the LONGEST chapter in the entire Bible – 176 verses.

It is also significant that this Psalm is virtually at the very center of the entire Bible.

Every one of its 176 verses speak about His Word – using many synonyms such as “commandments,” “statutes,” “testimonies” and such. Look for a reference to God's word in almost every one of the 176 verses. There is nothing like it anywhere else in the Bible!

This psalm is a rich treasure for meditation on the great value and extent of the Bible's wonder.

It is divided into 22 parts of 8 verses each. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and each verse of the first section starts with the Hebrew version of “A.” Each verse of the second section starts with the Hebrew version of “B” and so on throughout the Psalm. Thus, the psalm is also a child's primer on the Hebrew alphabet, using this technique to aid in memory.

Here is just a brief overview of the precious value of God's Word:

1. PURITY - verses 9 & 11

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.”

“Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.”

2. COMFORT - verse 50

“This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your word has revived me.”

3. DISCERNMENT - verse 66

"Teach me good discernment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments."

4. CORRECTION - verse 75

"I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me."

5. MEDITATION – verse 97

"O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day."

6. DIRECTION – verse 105

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

7. TRUTH - verse 160

"The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting."

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

FOR SUCCESS IN STUDY

1. HAVE A PLAN

Allow 80 hours for whole Bible, 20 hours for New Testament

(The O.T. is $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Bible, the N.T. $\frac{1}{4}$)

Doesn't have to be straight through in order, but keep track

Allow 5 hours for Gospel of John – good place to start

Focus on a book – short is OK, out of order is OK

Or focus on a topic = use a concordance or cross references

Use a helpful resource, such as "What The Bible Is All About"

Mark key passages – reflect and consider memorizing

2. STRIVE FOR CONSISTENCY

Make your plan realistic and achievable

Pick a time or days – not just "whenever"

Read/study some if you can't do "all" you've planned

Don't get discouraged, but rejoice in what you have accomplished

3. CELEBRATE YOUR PROGRESS

Consider an accountability partner

Consider journaling what God is teaching

Share lessons learned with others

4. DO IT!

OTHER INTERESTING INFORMATION (not in the message, but for further reflection)

√ The oldest written book of the Bible is believed to be Job, written by an unknown Israelite about 1500 B.C., between the time of Abraham and Moses. The next oldest books were

written by Moses between 1450 and 1400 B.C. These are among the oldest writings we possess. Amazing!

√ The first book written in the New Testament is believed to be by James, written by Jesus' earthly ½ brother as early as A.D. 45. The last book of the New Testament to be written is the last book of the Bible – Revelation, written by John on the island of Patmos about 95 A.D. These writings have survived 2,000 years and multiple handwritten copies have shown in their careful unity that they excellently reflect the original. Amazing!

ANOTHER SCIENCE FACT IN THE BIBLE (not in the message, but for further reflection)

Modern man has only recently discovered that light (electromagnetic radiation) has a “way” or a path, traveling at 186,000 miles per second. Yet in 1500 B.C. Job asks:

Job 38:19 *“Where is the way to the dwelling of light?”*

MORE DETAILED HISTORY OF THE BIBLE (not in the message, but for further study)

DEAD SEA SCROLLS (400 B.C. to 100 A.D.)

Until 1946 the earliest complete Old Testament manuscript in existence was the Ben Asher Codex, dating to about 1008 A.D. This manuscript served as the basis for most of the early Old Testament translations, including the King James Version of 1611.

In 1946, a teenage Bedouin shepherd was searching for a stray goat. Believing it had wandered into one of the caves that honeycombed the limestone cliffs just west of the Dead Sea, he threw a rock into the cave to scare it out. Instead of hearing the bleat of a goat, he heard the sound of breaking pottery. He climbed into what is now known as “Cave 1” and found ancient clay storage jars filled with 7 scrolls. These were the first of the “Dead Sea Scrolls” – a collection of 931 documents hidden in 10 caves which contained portions of every Old Testament book save one (the book of Esther) dating from 300 B.C. to 40 A.D. And many of the books were found complete. This discovery is the greatest literary, archaeological and Biblical discovery of our time. They are presently the oldest copies of the Old Testament in existence, and comparing the virtual similarity to the Ben Asher Codex which came 1000 years later, show how meticulously God has preserved His Holy Word through the centuries.

These Dead Sea Scrolls are now the basis for all of the contemporary translations of the Old Testament, shedding light on some of the minor problems encountered from the later Ben Asher Codex manuscripts.

CODEx VATICANUS (340 A.D.)

The oldest (and almost complete) manuscript of the Bible now in existence is the Codex Vaticanus, which dates from the first half of the 4th century (c. 340 A.D.). It is located in the library of the Vatican in Rome. There are older fragments that are still preserved – the oldest being a tiny scrap of the Gospel of John, found in Egypt, dating back to the beginning of the second century. No original manuscripts exist today, yet multiple copies exist with few discrepancies, demonstrating the attention to detail that copyists gave and assuring that God has preserved for us an accurate rendering of the original.

WYCLIFFE BIBLE (1382)

The first English translation of the Bible was by John Wycliffe in 1382 (even before verses were added). Some 250 manuscripts survive.

GUTENBERG BIBLE (1454)

The first printing of the Bible was in 1454 A.D. by Johannes Gutenberg, who invented the “type mold” for the printing press. It was the first book ever printed – and it was in German. (again before verses were added). This was Martin Luther’s bible, which led to the Reformation of 1517. 48 copies have survived, and they are some of the most valuable books in the world.

GENEVA BIBLE (1560)

The first complete Bible with chapter and verse divisions was the Geneva Bible of 1560. It was the first Bible available to the general public and was also the first “study” Bible, with a variety of scriptural study guides and aids. It was the primary Bible of 16th century Protestantism and was the Bible used by William Shakespeare, John Knox and John Bunyan, author of ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’. It came over to the Americas on the Mayflower.

KING JAMES BIBLE (1611)

King James of England commissioned the “King James Version” of the Bible in 1604 and it was completed seven years later in 1611. King James gave the 47 translators specific instructions that the new version would reflect the Episcopal structure of the Church of England and particularly its belief in an ordained clergy. The puritans pushed for it, perceiving problems in earlier translations, yet the translators failed to translate from available older scrolls. It became the “authorized version” in the English language through the 18th to 20th centuries.