

THE WONDERS OF THE BIBLE

Of all the wonders of God's creation we see all around us one of the truly greatest wonders is the book that most of you have on your lap now – God's instruction manual – the Bible. Today I'd like to share with you some of the amazing wonders of the Bible that put it far ahead of any other professed holy book of other religions around the world. I'd like to share with you today an interesting collection of facts about the Bible with the single purpose of helping you to better appreciate the Bible for the incredible book that it is.

The first point to note about the Bible is that it was written by not just one author but by 40 people. It stretches over a period of 1500 years out of different places and situations. What book ever extended over such an enormous writing period yet has such uniformity, exactness and consistency? This one volume miraculously ties together the same theme and the same message while presenting history, prophecy, law, poetry, proverbs, songs and pastoral letters.

How likely is it that different authors could write hundreds of years apart under different situations in different languages and still be consistent with their message? Virtually all other professed holy books like the Koran, the book of Mormon and others, are written by a single author. That the Bible has such a uniform message though written through so many people over such a vast period of time is truly amazing and puts it in a league ahead of any other professed holy book.

The apostle Peter wrote that "No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit" (**2 Peter 1:20-21**). The Bible's consistency and balance points to one Divine author who conveyed His instruction manual to mankind through the different styles and personalities of different writers who were inspired by God's spirit.

In his excellent book "The Authority of the Bible" Colin Peckham writes:

"Each writer was in a sense left to choose his own words, preserving their individual characteristics...The Spirit...guided the writer to choose the narrative and materials, speeches of others, imperial decrees, genealogies, official letters, state papers or historical matters he might find necessary for the recording of the divine message of salvation. He wrought in, with, and through their spirits, so as to preserve their individuality to others. He used the men themselves and spoke through their individualities. The gold was His; the mould was theirs."

In the original Hebrew canon of the Old Testament scriptures the Old Testament is composed of 22 books in three divisions – the Law, the Prophets and the Writings as Christ referred to them in **Luke 24:44**. The original canon of the New Testament is broken into four divisions – the historical books (the gospels and the book of Acts), the general epistles (those written by Peter, James, John and Jude), the epistles of Paul and the book of Revelation. With the three divisions of the Old Testament that's 7 divisions in the Bible in total. The New Testament is composed of 27 books. When combined with the 22 of the Hebrew Old Testament canon there are 49 books in all or 7 x 7. There are 7 general epistles and 14 or 2 x 7 epistles written by Paul. Seven, of course, is God's number of completeness.

If you'd like to turn to **Isaiah 8:16** we'll read a very interesting verse. It says in this verse: "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples." The prophecy implies that the testimony and law of the Word of God would be sealed up and completed by the disciples of

the Lord. It is evident that the apostles were very aware of the fact that God was using them as instruments through divine inspiration to add more books to the existing canon of scriptures that the Jewish community had at the time.

There are a couple of places in the New Testament that refer to already existing New Testament writings as Scripture. In **1 Timothy 5:18** the apostle Paul writes: "For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer *is* worthy of his wages.'" Many of you would have footnotes indicating the references of scriptures quoted by New Testament writers. There are two scriptures quoted in this verse. The first one comes from the Old Testament and is from **Deuteronomy 25:4**. The second one is from Luke's already existing gospel and is a quotation from **Luke 10:7**. Paul refers to both of them as Scripture.

The other example of existing New Testament writings referred to as scripture is in **2 Peter 3:15-16**, Peter speaks of the writings of 'our beloved brother Paul'. He says "in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also **the rest** of the Scriptures." Paul's writings here are placed on an equal level with the Old Testament Scriptures.

It's only logical that if God came and dwelt with mankind in the person of Jesus Christ that there would be some extension of the existing canon of Scripture to record the vital details of the life and teachings of Jesus. When we get down to the end of the apostle John's life, who was the last surviving of the twelve apostles, we have the perfect conclusion to the Scriptures with the visions that form the Book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation dramatically foretells the end of the story with the millennium and new heavens and new earth in great detail. It also is a perfect complement to the Book of Genesis which begins the Bible.

The Bible is truly an incredible book. It begins with a garden, a tree of life and an invitation to enjoy it (**Genesis 2-3**) and it ends with that same theme of a garden and the tree of life and man and God ultimately enjoying an intimate relationship living peacefully together (**Revelation 22**). E.W. Bullinger in his famous Companion Bible, noted for its detailed appendices, has one appendix that shows 30 similarities where Genesis and Revelation reflect each other.

Every ancient people has had their own story about how the world was created. These have come to be called creation myths and are full of bizarre ideas with multiple gods fighting each other. Is **Genesis 1** just another creation myth that borrowed ideas from other creation myths of the Babylonians or the Egyptians?

Astrophysicist Hugh Ross in his book "The Creator and the Cosmos" compared the Bible to other creation myths and wrote: "The [Bible's] distinctives struck me immediately. It was simple, direct and specific...Instead of just another bizarre creation myth, here was a journal-like record of the earth's initial conditions – correctly described from the standpoint of astrophysics and geophysics – followed by a summary of the sequence of changes through which Earth came to be inhabited by living things and ultimately by humans. The account was simple, elegant and scientifically accurate" (p.15).

It's interesting that he describes it as scientifically accurate for the Bible is a scientifically accurate book when it touches on scientific matters.

In **Ecclesiastes 1:6-7** we read, "The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north. The wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea *is* not full; To the place from which the rivers come, there they return again." Here King Solomon gives a perfect description of the earth's air currents and the rain

cycle. He describes water being evaporated from the seas and falling on the land and into the rivers which flow into the sea where the cycle begins yet again.

In **Isaiah 40:22** we read: "He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants *are* like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in". Long before Christopher Columbus, the Bible spoke of the earth as a circle or sphere, not as a flat earth as believed by many in ancient times.

Along with the unity of message through so many different authors the Bible has some incredible types and shadows that you simply don't see any other professed holy book come near to. In "The Authority of the Bible" Colin Peckham describes many of the wonderful shadows and types of New Testament events in the Old Testament:

"The history of the Israelites pictures the New Testament plan of salvation showing that the Old Testament and the New Testament present one message. In the Old Testament it is the shadows and types, and in the New Testament we have the reality of an accomplished salvation.

"The Israelites were in bondage to the Egyptians. Egypt is a picture of the old life of sin in which all are held under the domination of Pharaoh, who represents the devil. The only way to be rescued from Egypt's bondage and God's judgement was through the blood of the lamb. They were to be spared from the judgement of God, which rested on the whole land, only by applying the blood to their doorposts. This, of course, is a picture of God's judgement on the sinful world, from which we can escape solely by applying the blood of the Lamb of God to our hearts. The judgement passed from the people to the lamb. The slain lamb is the substitute for the first-born, and God's Lamb is our substitute. He dies in our place, and we are free from the old life of bondage, sorrow and sin through the blood of the Lamb [**1 Corinthians 5:7**].

"On their journey they were immediately fed on manna from heaven, a picture of Jesus nourishing His people...They needed water, and when Moses struck the rock the water flowed for all to quench their thirst. Paul tells us that 'they drank of that spiritual Rock...and that Rock was Christ' (**1 Corinthians 10:4**)...Their eventful journey from Egypt had one objective, to bring them to Canaan; 'Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers' (**Deuteronomy 6:23**). As many able commentators have affirmed, the picture of Canaan is that of the life of Christian victory and [entering His kingdom]."

Many of the great characters of the Bible such as Abraham and Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David and Solomon were themselves types of Jesus Christ sharing some of the same things that Christ went through. Then we have the shadows and types of the Holy Days which picture step by step the great plan of God. In comparing the Bible and its shadows and salvation message with that of the Koran, Colin Peckman also says the following in his book "The Authority of the Bible":

"The writings of the world's religions in comparison with the Bible, are seen to be unhistorical. Their teachings are not worked out step by step in the life of a people...Islam certainly does not emphasize the problem of sin and has very little consciousness of it. In contrast to Christianity which calls for inward holiness not outward form, Islam proposes self righteous works as a means of salvation. It is externalistic [focusing on doing certain outward actions without any focus on having purity in one's thoughts and motives]...

"Mohammed commands his disciples to kill those who oppose his claims. Christ commands His disciples to bless those who curse them and to do good to those who hate them (**Matthew 5:43-44**). The Koran fails to speak of God's holiness which requires His

punishment for sin...It fails to speak of the [payment] of transgression by the sacrifice which God in His great love initiated; of the assurance of pardon for sin; of the marvellous regeneration by the indwelling Spirit of God which transforms men and women and makes them new...Allah does not enter into humanity and therefore cannot render to humanity the highest service."

We also see many shadows and types in the great many prophecies for the end-time set to occur in our near future. Many events that occurred in ancient Israel were a type of events prophesied for the end time. The first few chapters of the book of Isaiah give a snapshot of the sins of Israel which are common to both ancient Israel and the modern descendants of the tribes of Israel.

After ancient Israel split into two nations the northern kingdom of Israel was eventually taken captive by Assyria and the southern kingdom of Judah was taken captive 100 years later by the Babylonians. In the end-time the Beast power that conquers modern Israel (**compare Revelation 18:7-8 with Isaiah 47:5-9 and Isaiah 10:5, 20**) is referred to as both Assyria and Babylon because the United European power that will be a final revival of the Roman Empire will be composed of the ethnic peoples who descend from both the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian empires.

Fulfilled prophecy is one of the greatest proofs of the Bible. In the book of Isaiah at the end of chapter 44 and the beginning of chapter 45 (**Isaiah 44:28-45:1-3**) we find an astonishing prophecy where 200 years ahead of time God actually gives the name of the Persian king, Cyrus, who would be the conqueror of Babylon and who would also be the one who would allow the Jews rebuild Jerusalem.

In **Daniel 11** we find the longest prophecy or collection of prophecies in the Bible. This series of about 40 detailed prophecies describes the course of history from the time of Daniel to the time of Jesus Christ's second coming. The supplement to Daniel 11 to the Bible Reading Program on the church's website shows in detail how all of them, bar the ones for our near future, have come to pass precisely and makes a fascinating read.

When we look at nature and the universe all around us three qualities of God leap out at us if we are paying attention – the Creator is a God who values individuality, freedom to choose and He's logical. The Bible reflects these three qualities and shows God as a God who loves individuality (with unity not forced uniformity). It speaks of great diversity of gifts but one Spirit in the church (**1 Corinthians 12:4**). God does not want automatons. He wants children who will love Him freely and, even against temptation, choose to love Him and His way of life because they want to, not because they have to! The Koran's concept of jihad and conversion by the edge of a sword violates this principle of freedom of choice.

We see God's logic in all the wonderful shadows and types we have just looked at. We also see it in His great laws and statutes that are built on the principles of love for all mankind, even one's enemies. Those laws are both profound and logical.

The Bible truly is an amazing book. It has a profound unity though written through so many authors over such a long period of time. It has so many incredible interwoven patterns and shadows and types. Its teachings are worked out step by step through the lives of its characters. It is historically and scientifically accurate. Its accurate and fulfilled prophecies stand as testimony to the God who can predict and make things happen in the future.

From the beginning of the Bible to its end we see a God who has acted with profound love towards His people and who has had a loving plan to redeem all mankind and bring us into His family. Let's all value and appreciate the Bible more and more for the truly incredible book that it is.