

WHY SHOULD I BOTHER...

...with
the
bible?

Why should I bother with the Bible?

Because it's more than just another book in so many ways

It is of course the best selling book of all time – and of *any* time, continually selling 100 million copies or more, year-in, year-out

It was the first book ever to be printed, the book that's been translated into the most languages and the book that even secular commentators believe has influenced mankind more than any other

But none of that explains why a modern day person should *read* it, let alone base their life around it. That would only be a credible thing to do if it really could be established as the proven word of God

Can it be?

The objections are common....

- 'It's just another book'
- 'Well, we can't be sure that what we have today is what was originally written'
- 'The Bible's full of rubbish...'
- 'It's not historically accurate to believe in the Bible'
- 'Isn't the Bible full of contradictions?'
- 'And even if it's accurate, not contradictory and true to its original form, what makes it any different to any of the other foundational religious books in the world?'
- 'But so what: even if it is different, why should I read it? Or base my life around it?'

They're all credible questions. Let's try and answer them...

“ It is of course the best selling book of all time ”

1. 'It's just another book'

Is it? Here is a book:

1. Written over a 1,500 year span.

2. Written over 40 generations.

3. Written by over 40 authors from every walk of life

 including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc.:

Moses, a political leader, trained in the universities of Egypt

Peter, a fisherman

Amos, a herdsman

Joshua, a military general

Nehemiah, a cupbearer

Daniel, a prime minister

Luke, a doctor

Solomon, a king

Matthew, a tax collector

Paul, a rabbi

4. Written in different places:

Moses in the wilderness

Jeremiah in a dungeon

Daniel on a hillside and in a palace

Paul inside prison walls

Luke while travelling

John on the isle of Patmos

Others in the rigours of a military campaign

5. Written at different times:

David in times of war

Solomon in times of peace

6. Written during different moods:

Some writing from the heights of joy and others writing from the depths of sorrow and despair

7. Written on three continents:

Asia, Africa and Europe

8. Written in three languages:

- Hebrew: was the language of the Old Testament.

In 2 Kings 18:26-28 called "the language of Judah"

In Isaiah 19:18 called "the language of Canaan"

- Aramaic: was the "common language" of the Near East until the time of Alexander the Great (6th century B.C.- 4th century B.C.)

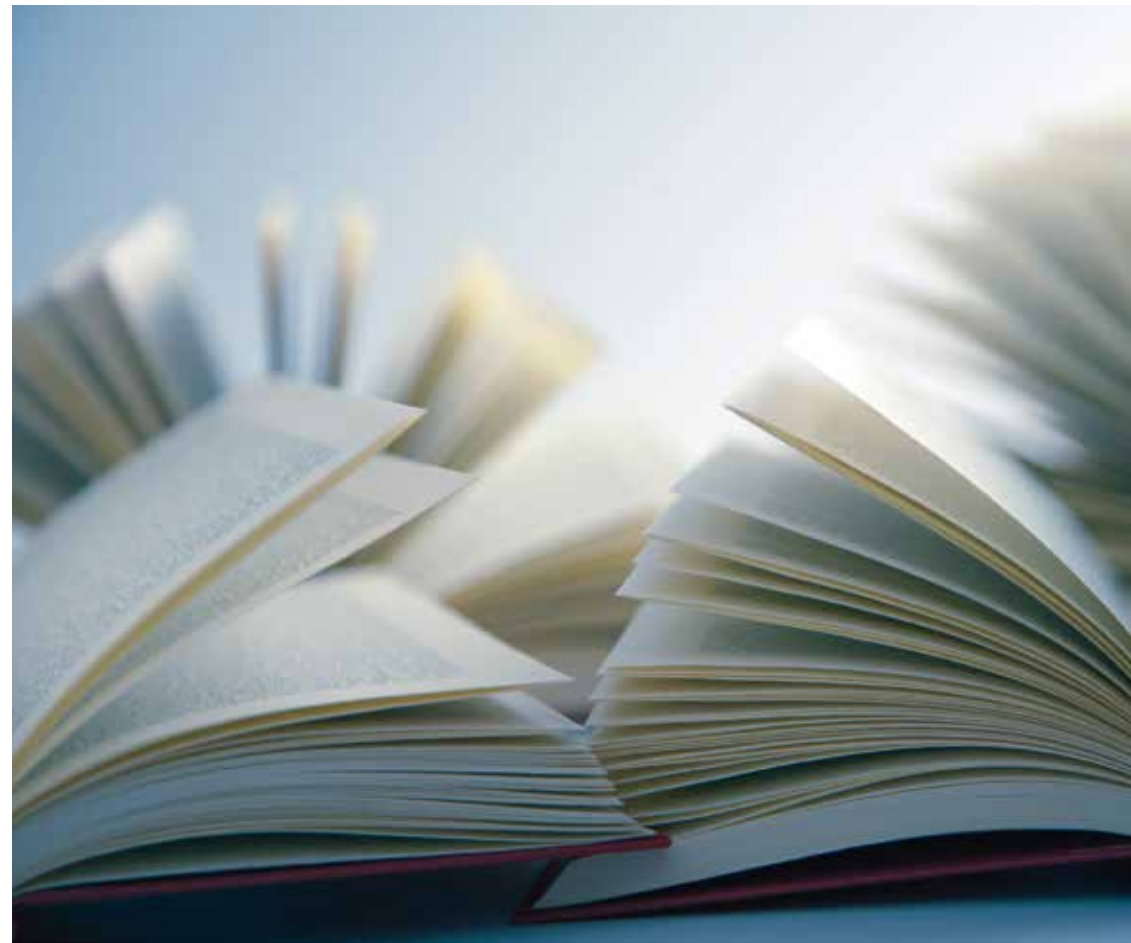
- Greek: New Testament language. Was the international language at the time of Christ.

9. Its subject matter includes hundreds of controversial subjects.

A controversial subject is one which would create opposing opinions when mentioned or discussed. Biblical authors spoke on hundreds of controversial subjects with harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation. There is one unfolding story: "God's saving plan for man."

If you're still questioning what makes the Bible different, we'd challenge you to ask ten authors to write on just one controversial subject (the Bible speaks of hundreds with harmony and agreement). Make the scenario easy by saying that all the writers could be from one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent and one language.

The result would be a mass of contradictory opinions and confusion. Now think how *unique* that makes the Bible.



2. 'Well, we can't be sure that what we have today is what was originally written'

Usually a view put forward by someone unaware of the facts.

The truth is that the number of old manuscripts corroborating ancient Bible text is far, far, far greater than that for any other ancient book. If we don't believe *that* evidence, then we also have to discount virtually every other ancient book we have today - Homer's Iliad for example. Ancient literature as we know it would have to disappear.

Final proof though came in 1947. Until then, the oldest Biblical manuscript scientists had was from 900AD. The manuscripts found in Qumran went back over 1,000 years further than that to before the time of Christ - 125BC. They tell us that apart from very, very minor changes, the Bible we have today is the one originally compiled before the time of Christ.



Sample of the dead sea scrolls

3. The Bible's full of rubbish...

Is it?

Now that we know that the book we have today is essentially the same, unaltered from its writing thousands of years ago, how can the hundreds of prophecies predicted in its pages that were then accurately later fulfilled be explained?

Many are very specific. Like the place of Jesus' birth (Micah 5:2). The date of His birth (Daniel 9:25). The manner of His birth (Isaiah 7:14). The manner of His death (Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 22:16 prophesied before the invention of crucifixion). The piercing of His side (Zechariah 12:10). And His burial (Isaiah 53:9).

It goes beyond Jesus too. The Bible makes a number of prophecies about the complete destruction of cities. Many of the cities it said would be rebuilt and several it claimed would never be rebuilt. The Bible is 100% accurate in both categories as archaeology shows. Take the city of Tyre. Ezekiel 26:3-5,7,12,14 and 16 (17) predict:

1. Nebuchadnezzar will take the city.
2. Other nations will participate in the fulfillment.
3. The city is to be made flat like the top of a rock.
4. It is to become a place for spreading nets.
5. Its stones and timber are to be laid in the sea.
6. The old city of Tyre will never be rebuilt.

History records now show that Nebuchadnezzar took the city and that all the other events happened in sequence. In fact, archaeology is a major tool in proving the Bible's credibility – as we shall see.

“...archaeology is a major tool in proving the Bible's credibility”

4. 'It's not historically accurate to believe in the Bible'

On the contrary, it's a book that stands the scrutiny of archaeology and historians:

Archaeology

Let's start with this. Far from disproving Biblical accounts many see as fantastic, continual archaeological finds can't help but substantiate them. Even in the last few years, one of the world's best known under water archaeologists Robert Ballard claims to have found evidence for the existence of Noah's Ark under the Black Sea.

It's the latest in a whole series of finds substantiating even the most incredible Bible stories. Take the falling of the walls of Jericho when the people of Israel first went into the Promised Land. For years, scientists and archaeologists ridiculed the Biblical account that the walls were made to fall outward: in Joshua 6:20, it says "...the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city every man straight ahead, and they took the city." Yet in the excavations of Jericho in the Thirties, Professor Garstang and his team found incontrovertible evidence that this had actually happened. Garstang says: "As to the main fact then, there remains no doubt: the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over their ruins into the city."

History

Richard Dawkins, author of the best seller 'The God Delusion', makes much of supposed Biblical inaccuracies. He uses as an example of the untrustworthiness of the Bible the references to Quirinius being governor of Syria at the time of the birth of Jesus (historians reckoned he wasn't at the time required) and that there was a census that required 'every man to return to his own city' (it was believed that censuses at that time wouldn't have required that).

Now we know different. An inscription found in Antioch shows us that Quirinius was actually governor twice, one of the periods coinciding with the Biblical claim.

And the census? Well a papyrus found in Egypt dating from the period now shows us that the Biblical account is completely credible. It reads: "Because of the approaching census it is necessary that all those residing for any cause away from their homes should at once prepare to return to their own governments in order that they may complete the family registration of the enrolment and that the tilled lands may retain those belonging to them."

There are many other examples that could be quoted – see the book 'Evidence that Demands a Verdict', by Josh McDowell

5. 'But isn't the Bible full of contradictions?'

Actually, it isn't. All of the so-called 'contradictions' in the Bible can be easily explained. There are too many to go into here but you can find a complete 'contradiction' list – with each one explained – in the 'contradictions in the Bible' section of the useful www.answersingenesis.org website. We can't resist though, quoting a typical example.

Take the way that the book of Matthew says Judas Iscariot died by 'hanging' while the book of Luke says that 'he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out'.

Contradiction? Not at all. Both things happened. Judas' dead body hung in the hot sun of Jerusalem with the bacteria inside his body actively breaking down tissues and cells. A byproduct of bacterial metabolism is often gas. The pressure created by the gas forces fluid out of the cells and tissues and into the body cavities. The body becomes bloated as a result. In addition, tissue decomposition occurs compromising the integrity of the skin. Judas' body was similar to an overinflated balloon, and as he hit the ground (due to the branch he hung on or the rope itself breaking) the skin easily broke and he burst open with his internal organs spilling out.



Jericho today

6. 'And even if the Bible's not contradictory and is true to its original form, what makes it any different to any of the other foundational religious books in the world?'

Isn't Christianity just another religion, albeit a very important one, that depends upon an irrelevant, outdated book that 'claims' to be the inspired word of God? Every religion, of course, claims its religious book is just that. And every religion, you may well think if you're not 'religious', is probably wrong.

Well what if you could *prove* that this Christian faith, this faith that has influenced the way the whole of our society is founded, really *is* based on a book that was dictated to its writers by the inspired word of a God who made us and everything around us. If that was possible, it would surely be hard not to take Christianity – and the Bible – seriously – wouldn't it?

What *is* it that makes this book, the Bible, unique? It is, quite simply this. That not *one* unscientific statement is in it. And that sets it apart from every other religious book. That's a big statement, but don't worry, we can corroborate it.

First of all, let's start by focusing on things that can be proven. You may think that claiming the Bible to be completely scientifically credible is crazy given that it's a book with stories in it as incredible as the Garden of Eden. Yet these areas of it don't relate to scientific fact: science hasn't proven the Garden of Eden didn't exist, so we don't know one way or the other (though it might yet: see for example, recent archaeological discoveries confirming the likely existence of Noah's Ark).

So let's focus on things that can actually be *proved*. Every religious book, to be relevant to humanity, must mention facts about the world around us – and indeed, all of them do. The problem for religious writers is that our understanding of the world around us is constantly changing. Which means that historical religious books are always going to be out of date. Because they were written by human beings. And not in the divinely inspired way they claim to be.

Let's take, at random, one religion's book, say the Hindu Vidas, written around the same time as much of the Bible. What does it say, for instance, is holding the earth up? Well, it says that the earth is held up 'on the back of four elephants and that they are balancing on a huge turtle swimming in a big sea'. Now that would have sounded perfectly plausible to the ancients when the Vidas was written but today, we can see that this is clearly an unscientific statement.

Maybe you think this kind of example is being unfair on the Hindus. It's not. All the peoples in the ancient world had similar theories. The Greeks, for example, thought that the world was held up on the shoulders of a giant, Atlas. Now you'd expect the Bible (with texts today proved by the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery in the 1940s to be

basically the same as those written thousands of years ago) to be full of this kind of rubbish. But instead, it's full of miraculous statements that have today's scientists scratching their heads in disbelief.

Here are just a few examples:

Space & Stars

- In Psalms (written 3000 years ago) in 19:4, it talks about the sun moving round the heavens (the ancients thought the sun was either still or went round the earth).
- Talking of the sun and the earth, and just to prove that there are New Testament examples too, Luke 17:34 shows us the earth spins on its axis, with half in light, half in darkness when it talks of Jesus coming again in a moment of time when for some it's night and for others, day.



Science

- In Isaiah (written 2700 years ago) in 40:22 it says that the earth is round: lest we forget, we live only two centuries after people laughed at anyone who thought it wasn't flat.
- In Ecclesiastes (written 3000 years ago), in 1:6-7, it talks about the water cycle: you know, rain falling, running down mountains into the sea, evaporating, then falling again. As recently as 250 years ago, people knew nothing about the water cycle and wondered how indeed water did get to the top of mountains to flow down into the sea.



Health

- Another very old Bible book, Leviticus written 3600 years ago, in 13 v45-46 talks about the laws of quarantine. Then it goes on to talk about the importance of washing your hands after touching unclean things like a dead body, something only discovered by scientist Dr Samuel Weiss in 1840
- Further on in the New Testament, the apostle Paul says that "growth comes from the head", long before scientists discovered the pituitary gland, which of course from the head, governs the growth of the whole body.

And there are many other examples. If you'd like to see them, drop an email to us to the address at the end of this booklet.

Summary

No secular scientists doubt today that the Bible's books are pretty much as they were written 2,000-4,000 years ago. In which case, how on earth did the writers know all this stuff thousands of years before scientists discovered it if what they were writing was not divinely inspired by God? And why, like all the other writers of religion-founding books, did they not include facts that in modern day terms would not look ridiculous?

Quite a lot of faith is needed to believe in much of modern science, 'The Big Bang Theory' for example, belief in which was described recently by one non-Christian scientist as like "believing that a whirlwind went into a junkyard and an hour later, out came a jumbo jet".

In contrast, you don't need a lot of faith to believe in scientific proven fact. In fact, you don't need any. And the Bible is full of scientifically proven fact miraculously written thousands of years before it came to light. Where could the knowledge of this come from apart from God? And if it *did* come from God, can you afford to ignore the rest of what He says in this book?

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...how on earth did the writers know all this stuff thousands of years before scientists discovered it if what they were writing was not divinely inspired by God?

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7. 'But so what: even if it *is* different, why should I read it? Or base my life around it?'

The answer to this is simple: because it's the word of God. We've corroborated that in the previous sections.

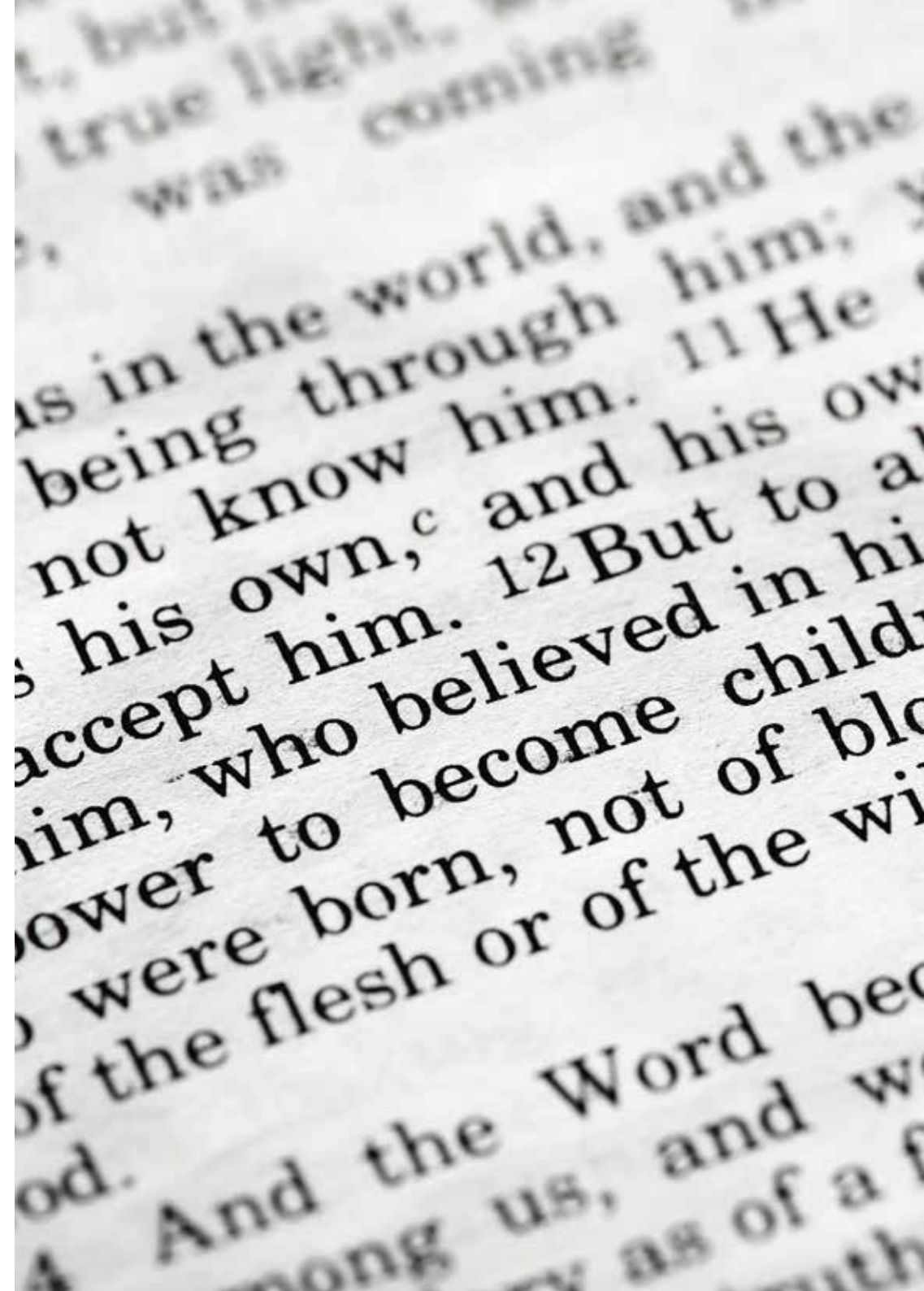
Now that recent archaeological findings have been proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the Bible we have today is essentially the same as what was originally written, modern critics have to explain how it was possible for:

- It to be such a harmonious document when compiled by so many over such a long time
- How its prophecies have come to be fulfilled
- How so many modern-day archaeological and historical findings have confirmed its stories
- How it comes to lack any proven scientific inaccuracy yet is full of so much that only in recent times has been proved by scientists

If God didn't inspire the Biblical writers to create the words they wrote, how were these things possible? Critics of the Bible must also explain why so many have, throughout the centuries, chosen rather to die than to renounce the words of the world's greatest book. If these issues can't be satisfactorily answered, the only explanation remaining is that the Bible is the word of God. And *that* has implications for every human being.

Let's finish with the words of Sir Walter Scott in reference to the Scriptures:

*"Within that aw[e]ful volume lies
The mystery of mysteries
Happiest they of human race
To whom God has granted grace
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray
To lift the latch, and force the way;
And better had they ne'er been born,
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn."*





Want to find out more about the issues raised here?
Why not email us at info@lifediscovery.co.uk

– or check out:

www.spacetothink.tv