

# The Bible

by Sebastian R. Fama

The Bible has been translated into more languages and has sold more copies than any other book in the history of mankind. It was written by numerous authors over a period of 1500 years. It was written in several languages on three different continents, and yet it is internally consistent in all that it teaches. It presents a message so profound that countless numbers of believers have gone to their deaths rather than deny it. Those who believe that the Scriptures were divinely inspired do not do so blindly. The divine inspiration of the Bible is something that can be demonstrated.

There are a total of 5364 New Testament manuscripts in existence. That is far more than for any other work of antiquity. The fact that some differ from the others does not detract from the Bible's credibility. Because the vast majority of them are the same, we can safely assume that they accurately reflect the originals. If the Bible were merely a collection of human writings, hand copied and passed down through the ages by men, we would expect a great number of omissions, additions, and variances. Most of the differences that we do find are nothing more than the types of errors that printers make today, what we would call typos. Only the originals would be free from such errors. **Upon examination we find that these small mistakes don't affect any doctrine, precept or promise of the Bible.** In other words, the teachings of the Bible remain uncorrupted.

The Dead Sea Scrolls provide further evidence that God protected the Bible from corruption. They were found in a cave near Khirbat Qumran, Jordan, in 1947. They contained fragments of every book of the Old Testament except for Esther. The book of Isaiah was found in its entirety. They turned out to be 1000 years older than the Masoretic manuscripts, which up until then were the oldest known. There were some differences in style, but none in substance.

There are claims that the Bible contains contradictions. Such claims are based on reading Scripture out of context. To properly understand Scripture, we must always take into account the society for which a particular book was written and the literary style employed. The Bible contains history, poetry, and apocalyptic writing (a highly symbolic language). We also find parables (stories composed to illustrate a point) and a good deal of hyperbole. Even today we routinely use hyperbole. We will often speak of someone laughing his or her head off or of it raining cats and dogs. Only someone unfamiliar with our culture would misunderstand such statements. Likewise, if we are unfamiliar with the culture in which the Bible was written, we will not understand certain parts of it. **When read in its proper context, the Bible has a message that is consistent and without contradiction.**

Archeology confirms the accuracy of Scripture. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire in Genesis 19 was thought by many to be a fairy tale, but in recent years the remains of two large cities were found at the southern tip of the Dead Sea. There is a great deal of bitumen, salt, and sulfur in the area. An investigation revealed that the layers of sedimentary rock were molded together by intense heat. The biblical account seems to indicate that there was a natural gas explosion. Such an explosion would have ignited the bitumen and sulfur, which would account for the "fire and brimstone" which the Bible says rained down on the cities. It would also explain how Lot's wife could have been encrusted in salt.

But what about the "silly passages"? You know, like the story of Noah's Ark? Incredibly enough, the story of Noah's Ark does not discredit Scripture - rather it does the opposite. There is a lot of evidence indicating that the earth was once entirely covered by water. The Grand Canyon is one example. We are told that it was formed over millions of years by the Colorado River wearing down through solid rock. But that is simply not possible. It is a hydrodynamic principle that water cannot meander while cutting through a solid material. It can only meander if it is cutting through soft, unconsolidated material such as mud or sand. It meanders because the soft material gives way to the pressure of the water. The Grand Canyon meanders and is quite deep. Logically one must conclude that the canyon was formed while its layers were still relatively soft.

But how would so much mud and sand come to be in one place? After all, the Grand Canyon is 277 miles long, 18 miles wide, and 5000 feet deep. And what would produce enough water to perform such a feat? The only possible answer seems to be that the mud and sand were deposited by global floodwaters. A large channel, such as the Grand Canyon, could only have been cut when those same floodwaters receded.

The existence of large fossil beds is another indication that the earth was once totally flooded. Generally speaking, fossils are not a natural occurrence. When an animal dies or is killed, its flesh is either eaten or it rots. Over time its bones turn to dust. The only way that it could be preserved as a fossil is if it was buried at, or soon after, death. The existence of fossil beds containing the remains of as many as five million animals each would certainly rule out small natural floods.

The main objection to the flood of Noah is that such a flood would not have been natural. This is correct; it would not have been natural. However, we know that it happened. **If it happened and it was not natural, then it was supernatural, which is exactly what the Scriptures teach.**

There are occasions when historians will scoff at the Bible with claims that certain individuals mentioned in Scripture never existed. One such case is that of Gallio, Proconsul of Achaia. Acts 18:12-17 records that the apostle Paul was brought before him. The whole account was dismissed by many as being fictitious. Even Gallio's title was thought to be fantasy. That is, until an inscription was found at Delphi recording both his name and his title. It also dates him to 51 A.D., the time that Paul was in Corinth (F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History* pages 298, 316).

For the most part, objection to the Bible has little to do with obscure passages or points of history. The real objection is to the many clear passages dealing with morality. In all too many cases the rejection of Scripture is just an attempt to take God out of the picture. If the Bible can be discredited, then its moral teachings carry little weight. If that is the case, then we are left to ourselves to determine what is right and what is wrong. Inevitably, we do as we please. Unfortunately, this has a negative effect on society.

In the early 60's many Americans saw fit to rebel against the biblical morality that had guided us for so long. The results were disastrous. Since 1960 our population has risen 41% – yet violent crime has risen 560%. Total crime is up 300%. People have become more self-centered and much less caring. There are an estimated 12 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases in the U.S. each year. Of these, three million occur among teenagers (Centers for Disease Control, *The Challenge of STD Prevention in the United States*). Despite massive education efforts, lives are still being destroyed by widespread drug abuse.

What do you think would happen if all Americans took Biblical morality seriously? The problems mentioned above would cease to exist. School children would go back to throwing snowballs at each other rather than using automatic weapons. People would begin to take marriage seriously and divorce rates would go down. Children would actually grow up knowing both of their parents. Tens of billions of dollars' worth of merchandise would no longer be stolen each year. Consequently, the cost of living would go down and the number of poor people would be dramatically reduced. Many of our other problems would disappear almost overnight.

**Human experience demonstrates the power of Scripture.** Prison inmates who attended 10 or more Prison Fellowship Bible studies in a year were nearly three times less likely to be re-arrested during the 12 months after release than a matched comparison group. Specifically, **only 14% of those attending Bible study were re-arrested compared with 41% of those who did not** (*Ministry Development Division. 1998. Religious programs, institutional adjustment, and recidivism among former inmates in Prison Fellowship Programs. Summaries of Prison Fellowship Program Evaluations & Surveys. Washington, DC: Prison Fellowship Ministries, page 6*). Professor David G. Myers notes that we now have massive evidence that people active in faith communities are happier and healthier than their unchurched peers. (Recent epidemiological studies—tracking thousands of lives through years of time—reveal they even outlive their unchurched peers by several years). Why do you suppose that is?

People may not always want to act like Christians themselves, but they always seem to want everyone else to. To illustrate this point Dennis Prager once asked: "If your car broke down in a crime-ridden area and some strapping teenage boys approached you, wouldn't you feel better knowing they had just come from a Bible study?"