

The Indestructible Bible

Text: Jeremiah 36:1-7 and 20-32

King Jehoiakim's unsuccessful attempt to destroy the Word of God has been duplicated by many powerful people, but the Bible stays alive and dynamic.

The Heaven4sure web site in its LifeLessons link supports the aliveness of the Bible by one who is not "Bible pusher." It reads: "David Radish, one of the world's top 25 bloggers has something to say about the Bible. Is he a Christian? No, and he would be very quick to tell you that. His writings have been featured in TIME, Esquire, GO, Mademoiselle, New York Times, etc. He's no slouch as a credible writer. You can be sure; he is not going to exaggerate the popularity of the Bible. He's no friend of the book—not by a long shot! In the New Yorker he wrote, "The familiar observation that the Bible is the best-selling book of all times obscures the fact that the Bible is the best-selling book every year."

The apostle Peter explains why the Bible is ever lasting. It is indestructible. I Peter 1:23-25 records his conviction with these words, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." He then draws from the prophet Isaiah who wrote at least seven centuries before, "For , 'all men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.'" Isaiah 40:8 So Peter claimed that the Bible is not subject to decay, is free from error or corruption and it stays alive.

[I would encourage the communicator to check out the outstanding article in the December/2011 National Geographic. The cover pictures the King James Bible, first edition, 1611. The subtitle of the article is "Making a Masterpiece." While the author makes some assumptions about the political purposes of the King James, he grants that the Bible has had an unmistakable imprint on humankind these past 400 years.]

Even as Herod sought to destroy the **Living** Word of God, Jesus. There have been many efforts to rid the earth of the **Written** Word of God. I believe that one of the evidences of the Bible's supernatural nature is its miraculous preservation.

Let me briefly touch on four such miracles of preservation.

1. The Bible is a miracle when you consider the material upon which it was written. Much of the Bible was written on fragile papyri. In some of the folk religion like that of the Nagi tribes. They claimed their Bible was written on animal skin. And because their forefathers did not protect the skins, dogs ate them. (These ideas can be found in Don Richardson's terrific book entitled, *Eternity in Their Hearts*.) On the border of Laos the Lahu people believe that the Word of God was written to them on rice cakes, but when famine came, the forefathers ate the cakes for physical survival. But when Peter wrote about the imperishable word he is not discussing the material upon which it is written, but the preserved words. The materials upon which the Scriptures were inscribed was varied such as animal skin (leather) or parchment that suffered with age. Yet the Bible has miraculously survived and is still being published through out the world.

[Transition: I believe that leads us to consider a second miracle of the indestructibility of the Bible.]

2. The Bible is a miracle when you consider the number of ancient Manuscripts. The renowned New Testament scholar Bruce Metzger estimates that there are over 5000 Greek New Testament manuscripts of the New Testament. In these are more than 200,000 lines with an accuracy of 99.5%. I personally believe that the late invention of the printing press was providential. This allowed 1400 years to exercise minute painstaking work of proof reading. If one scribe wrote down the word "want" instead of the word "went." It would immediately be corrected by the copyist. By the time the printing press had been employed the text had been formed and agreed upon and was ready for mass duplication. I am sure that secular scholars value the ancient texts of Plato, Herodotus, Caesars Gallic War, etc. But remember that there are more ancient portions of the Bible than any ten of classical literature combined

[Transition: Another weight of evidence for the miraculous endurance of the Bible related to the manuscripts is.]

3. The Bible is a miracle because of the agreement found in the ancient Manuscripts. Less than two dozen verses are in question in the several thousand manuscripts we have found. None of these are relating to doctrinal matters. This is extraordinary when you consider that Shakespeare wrote over two hundred years ago and in his 37 plays there are 100 disputed passages, many of which affect the meaning of the text.

SO PETER WAS FILLED WITH GODLY WISDOM AND MAY I SAY INSPIRED KNOWLEDGE THAT THE BIBLE IS INCORRUPTIBLE.

[Transition: Having shown the fragile nature of the ancient scriptures long with the massive numbers of copies and the miniscule number of disagreements we come to a fourth evidence of the miraculous perseverance of the Bible.

4. The Bible is a miracle when you recognized the numerous times in which powerful people sought to destroy it. Sometimes it was lost from neglect. Read the thrilling story from II Chronicles 34: 14ff. Other attempts were deliberate. Diocletian (303 A.D.) said that the Christians were people of The Book. He ordered that the Bible be destroyed and any possessing the Bible would be executed. He thought he had been so successful that he erected a column with this inscription, “Extincto nomine Christianorum” which means “Christian is extinguished.” But only 25 years later his successor Constantine commissioned Eusebius to prepare 50 copies of the Scriptures to be paid for by the government.

Voltaire, the famous French philosopher and infidel said, “After one hundred years of my death the Bible will be an antique—a collector’s item.” Yet in fact fifty years after his death the Geneva Bible Society purchased his house and used his printing press to publish Bibles throughout Europe. The late Dr. W.A. Criswell claims one hundred years after the death of Voltaire, an ancient copy of a Codex was purchased by the British government for \$500,000.00 from the Russian government. He added on that very day a copy of Voltaire’s writing was sold in a Paris market for eleven cents.

[I am aware that this is rather a simple sermon about the indestructible Word of God. But I see a very strong movement in our society which is affecting the church of Jesus Christ. It can be shown in many ways, but one that aspect of it is the changing of the clear words of Jesus as to the nature of marriage. Pressure is being exerted on military chaplains and churches of mainline denominations to redefine marriage.

Without burning Bibles the matches of modern society are trying to do away with the Bible in our everyday life.

After nearly fifty five years of preaching I would like to announce to my family, children, grandchildren and dear people to whom I have had the privilege to speak that I say “amen” to Psalm 119:89 which reads, “Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.” I take that to mean that before the Word was delivered in earth It existed in heaven. When I was in college I heard this poem and it still rings true in my heart.

*Last eve I paused beside the blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vespers chimes;
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn out with beating years of
time.*

*How many anvils have you had, said I,
To wear and batter all these hammers so?
“Just one,” said he and then with twinkling eye,
“The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.
And so I thought the anvil of God's word
For ages skeptics' blows have beat upon.
Yet, though the voice of falling blows were heard.
The anvil was unharmed, the hammers are gone.
John Clifford (quoted in W.A. Criswell's *Abiding
Hope.*)*