

Proof #8 - The Bible is a book that has endured as no other book ever written.

When one analyzes the Bible, it has an eternal and enduring character to it as no other book ever written. In fact, the Bible has influenced and continues to influence all generations and cultures.

G. S. Wegener, in his book *6000 Years Of The Bible*, writes: "...the doubter...even the unbeliever, must acknowledge that the Bible has left its mark on the history of mankind as no other book has done, and has exercised a decisive influence on the Western world. Its story is part of the fabric of our civilization; its importance transcends the boundaries of sect and schism" (p. 7).

Werner Keller, a non-theologian journalist, in his book *The Bible As History*, writes: "No book in the whole history of mankind has had such a revolutionary influence, has so decisively affected the development of the western world, or had such a world-wide effect as the 'Book of Books,' the Bible. Today it is translated into 1,660 languages and dialects (*in 1979*) and after 2,000 years gives no sign of having exhausted its triumphal progress" (pp. 22-23).

Even the most ardent skeptic must factually admit there has never been an impacting and enduring book that is comparable to the Bible. It continually does endure and it continually does impact lives.

The survival of the Bible is amazing and in fact is miraculous. There are three areas of survival that need to be considered:

(Area of Survival #1) - The Bible has survived through time.

In analyzing this time survival reality, there are two specific categories that need to be discussed:

Category #1 - The Survival of the Old Testament.

Just the title Old Testament lends to the thesis that this is an old writing that has survived time. The Israelites were very careful to preserve and copy the Hebrew Old Testament, and they did so with great care and accuracy, which has never been given to any other book.

In fact, the O.T. Hebrew manuscripts were very carefully and accurately copied:

- 1) The Jewish scribes had a tremendous reverence for Scripture, which led them to have scrupulous rules for copying. For example, they were required to count all Hebrew letters on a page and all lines on the page and if there was one mistake, it had to be discarded.
- 2) There are duplicate passages in the O.T. that clearly show a careful word for word copying and individuality. Psalm 14/53.

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- 3) The Hebrew O.T. was translated into Greek about 250 B.C. This translation is called the Septuagint. There is agreement between the translations, and the Septuagint is often quoted in the N.T., showing the accuracy of the manuscript.
- 4) A Samaritan copy of the Pentateuch, which is the first five books of the O.T., agrees with the Hebrew O.T.
- 5) The Dead Sea Scrolls confirm the accuracy of the texts written in Hebrew thousands of years prior.

When we go through the O.T., we learn about various writers who wrote the original texts. For example, we know that Moses was one of the writers who wrote the O.T. law (i.e. Deuteronomy 31:9). If we date the law that he wrote somewhere near 1,440 B.C., and then look at II Kings 22:8, which takes place about 621 B.C., we may conclude that those O.T. writings were very carefully preserved.

One of the more intriguing O.T. texts of Scripture that clearly does show the miraculous survival ability of the O.T. is found in Jeremiah 36. God commanded Jeremiah to write His Word on a scroll (Jer. 36:1-3). Jeremiah called Baruch to help him tackle this project (36:4). When King Jehoiakim learned that God's Word was being copied and read, he sent Jehudi to get it and read it to him, and when he listened to a portion of it, he had the manuscript cut-up and burned (36:21-23). This was a direct attempt to get rid of this portion of God's written Word. However, what we learn in Jeremiah 36:27-28, 32 is that Baruch reproduced it. **It is clear that God, Himself, was carefully overseeing and preserving and copying the Word of God.**

The preservation of the O.T. manuscripts is an amazing study in Divine providence. As far as we may determine, the actual Hebrew manuscript actually penned by the real author (i.e. Moses) is not available. The original manuscript penned by the original writer is called "autograph." As far as Hebrew scholars may determine, there are no first manuscripts written by the original author that are in existence. So the original documents penned by men like Moses, Samuel, David and Isaiah, to our knowledge, are not in existence. **What we have today are copies of those originals.** We do know from Jeremiah 36 that copies of the originals are in fact part of the sovereign providence of God in preserving His Word.

The first attempt to form a collection of Hebrew manuscripts was done by Benjamin Kennicott from the years A.D. 1776-1780. He was able to compile and list 615 O.T. manuscripts. Four years later, Giovanni de Rossi published a list of 731 manuscripts of the O.T. (A.D. 1784-1788).

However, the two most amazing discoveries of O.T. manuscripts preserved by God that clearly showed the reliability of the O.T. were: 1) The O.T. manuscripts of Cairo Geniza (A.D. 1899ff); 2) The Dead Sea Scrolls (A.D. 1947ff.)