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Question 95 - What supernatural elements may be seen regarding the indestructibility of the Bible?

Harold Willmington
Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

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101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

95. What supernatural elements may be seen regarding the indestructibility of the Bible?

The story is told of a visitor who toured a blacksmith shop. Viewing heaps of discarded hammers but only one huge anvil, he asked: "How often do you replace your anvil?" With a smile the owner replied, "Never! It is the anvil that wears out the hammers, you know!"

So it is with the Word of God. The hammers of persecution, ridicule, higher criticism, liberalism, and atheism have for centuries pounded out their vicious blows upon the divine anvil, but all to no avail. There they lay, in rusting piles, while the mighty anvil of the Scriptures stands unbroken, unshaken, and unchipped.

A. Its indestructibility in spite of political persecutions (from the Roman emperors)

In A.D. 303, Emperor Diocletian thought he had destroyed every hated Bible. After many tireless years of ruthless slaughter and destruction, he erected a column of victory over the embers of a burned Bible. The title on the column read: "Extinct is the Name of Christian." Twenty years later, the new Emperor Constantine offered a reward for any remaining Bibles. Within 24 hours no less than 50 copies were brought out of hiding and presented to the king.

B. Its indestructibility in spite of religious persecutions

1. As seen through the persecutions by Roman Catholic popes – Almost without exception, the early popes opposed the reading and translating of the Bible. In 1199, Pope Innocent III ordered the burning of all Bibles.
 2. As seen through the persecutions leveled against John Wycliffe and William Tyndale – Of all the heroes in church history no two other names are so closely associated with the Word of God than the names of Wycliffe and Tyndale. The very mention of these two men was no doubt sufficient to turn the devil livid with rage. It is therefore no surprise to read of the vicious attacks leveled against them.
- After his death, those who hated his Bible translation activities said the following things about Wycliffe:

John Wycliffe, the organ of the devil, the enemy of the Church, the confusion of the common people, the idol of heretics, the looking glass of hypocrites, the encourager of schism, the sower of hatred, the storehouse of lies, the sink of flattery, was suddenly struck by the judgment of God . . . that mouth which was to speak huge things against God and against His Saints or holy church, was miserably drawn aside . . . showing plainly that the curse which God had

thundered forth against Cain who also inflicted upon him. [From the mouth of a Monk].

That pestilent wretch John Wycliffe, the son of the old serpent, the forerunner of Antichrist, who had completed his iniquity by inventing a new translation of the Scriptures.

(General Biblical Introduction, p. 329)

One would almost conclude the Savior had this in mind when he spoke the following words: *"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me"* (Jn. 16:1-3).

- In 1529, an amusing and thrilling event happened in England and Europe concerning the Word of God. Tyndale had been driven from England and had fled to Germany, but had continued producing New Testaments and slipping them back into England. One day the Bishop of London (Bishop Tunstall) remarked to a British merchant, a man named Packington and a secret friend of Tyndale, of his desire to buy up all copies of the New Testament.

Said Packington, "My Lord, if it be your pleasure, I can buy them, for I know where they are sold, if it be in your Lord's pleasure to pay for them. I will then assure you to have every book of them that is imprinted."

Said the Bishop, "Gentle master Packington, do your diligence and get them; and with all my heart I will pay for them whatsoever they cost you, for the books are erroneous . . . and I intend to destroy them all, and burn them at St. Paul's Cross."

Packington then came to Tyndale and said, "William, I know that thou art a poor man, and hast a heap of New Testaments and books by thee, by the which thou hast endangered thy friends and beggared thyself; and I have now gotten thee a merchant, which with ready money shall dispatch thee of all that thou hast, if you think it so profitable to thyself."

"Who is the merchant," asked Tyndale.

"The Bishop of London," answered Packington.

"Oh, that is because he will burn them."

"Yes, marry, but what of that? The Bishop will burn them anyhow, and it is best that you should have the money for enabling you to imprint others instead."

"I shall do this," said Tyndale, "for these two benefits shall come thereof: First, I shall get money to bring myself out of debt, and the whole world will cry out against the burning of God's Word; and Second, the overplus of the money

that shall remain to me shall make me more studious to correct the said New Testament, and so newly to imprint the same once again, and I trust the second will be much better than ever was the first." So the bargain was made. The bishop had the books, Packington had the thanks, and Tyndale had the money. Later, a man named Constantine was being tried as a heretic, and the judge promised him favor if he would tell how Tyndale received so much help in printing so many Testaments.

He replied, "My Lord, I will tell you truly: It is the Bishop of London that hath helped, for he hath bestowed among us a great deal of money upon the New Testaments to burn them, and that hath been, and yet is, our chief help and comfort." (ibid, p. 339)

3. As seen through the persecution of the Queen of England:

Mary, Queen of England, also known as Bloody Mary, ordered that anyone possessing a copy of the Bible would be burned. Five years after her edict, she was dead. Queen Elizabeth I ascended to the throne of England. During her time as queen, she ordered no less than 130 editions of the Bible to be published.

4. As seen through the persecutions by Russian dictators.

- **Lenin**

Lenin, the godless Communist leader, declared: "I expect to live long enough to attend the funeral of all religion." The Communist dictionary issued by the Soviet State Publishing House describes the Bible as a "collection of fantastic legends without any scientific support." That dictionary also says "religion is a fantastic faith in gods, angels and spirits, a faith supported and maintained by the reactionary circles." Yet, when that same State Publishing House, *Politizdat*, released a book of Old Testament stories, long lines formed outside the bookstore and all 100,000 copies were sold in a matter of minutes!

- **Stalin**

This bloody butcher took over all of Russia at the death of Lenin in the late twenties. From this point on until his death in the fifties, Stalin instituted a "ban the Bible" purge from the USSR such as had never been witnessed before. This miserable man literally attempted to wipe the Word of God and the God of the Word from the Russian minds. Did he succeed? A recent poll taken in Russia shows that today more people than ever believe in God and His Word.

- **Leonid Brezhnev**

In 1964 Brezhnev joined a group which forced Nikita Khrushchev from power and eventually became premier of Russia. Brezhnev espoused the atheism and hostility towards Christianity as his predecessors Lenin, Stalin, and

Khrushchev had done. In 1982 President Reagan sent V.P. George Bush to represent the U.S. at Brezhnev's funeral.

Mr. Bush observed the long, sad line of the party faithful silently file by the dead premier's casket. He said the entire service was utterly morbid and depressing. The final person to pass by was Brezhnev's wife. For a long time she stood there, gazing at the corpse. Suddenly, to the amazement of the Vice President – she made the sign of the cross and hurriedly moved on!

A. Its indestructibility in spite of philosophical persecution – Here several cases come to mind:

1. **Voltaire** – He once said, “Another century and there will be not a Bible on the earth.” The century is gone, and the circulation of the Bible is one of the marvels of the age. After he died, his old printing press and the very house where he lived was purchased by the Geneva Bible Society and made a depot for Bibles.

On December 24, 1933, the British Government bought the valuable Codex Sinaiticus from the Russians for half a million dollars. On that same day a first edition of Voltaire's work sold for 11 cents in Paris book shops.

2. **Thomas Paine** – He once said, “I have gone through the Bible as a man would go through a forest with an axe to fell trees. I have cut down tree after tree; here they lie. They will never grow again.” Tom Paine thought he had demolished the Bible, but since he crawled into a drunkard's grave in 1809, the Bible has leaped forward as never before.
3. **David Hume**, the infidel philosopher, sarcastically sneered: “Methinks I see the twilight of Christianity.” But, as Dr. Robert G. Lee caustically commented: “The trouble with Hume in his fuming was that he could not tell what time of day it was. What he thought was sundown going toward midnight was sunup going toward noonday.” And, as Lee further pointed out: “The first meeting for the reformation of the Auxiliary Bible Society of Edinburgh was held in the very room in which Hume died.”

Yes, the Bible has wonderfully and miraculously survived the vicious attacks of all its enemies without the church. As an unknown admirer wrote long ago:

“Century follows century – there it stands.
Empires rise and fall and are forgotten – there it stands.
Dynasty succeeds dynasty – there it stands.
Kings are crowned and uncrowned – there it stands.
Despised and torn to pieces – there it stands.
Storms of hate swirl about it – there it stands.

Atheists rail against it – there it stands.
Profane, prayerless punsters caricature it – there it stands.
Unbelief abandons it – there it stands.
Thunderbolts of wrath smite it – there it stands.
The flames are kindled about it – there it stands.”

A very fitting way to end this section would be to quote the words of Harald Lillonas’ great gospel hymn entitled, The Bible Stands:

“The Bible stands like a rock undaunted
‘mid the raging storms of time;
Its pages burn with the truth eternal,
And they glow with a light sublime.

“The Bible stands like a mountain tow’ring
far above the works of men;
Its truth by none ever was refuted,
And destroy it they never can.

“The Bible stands and it will forever,
when the world has passed away;
By inspiration it has been given,
All its precepts I will obey.

“The Bible stands ev’ry test we give it,
for its author is divine;
By grace alone I expect to live it,
And to prove it and make it mine.

“The Bible stands tho’ the hills may tumble,
it will firmly stand when the earth shall crumble;
I will plant my feet on its firm foundation,
For the Bible stands.”