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## Question 100 - What supernatural elements may be seen regarding the care and copy, amazing circulation and absolute honesty of the Bible?

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## 101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

### 100. What supernatural elements may be seen regarding the care and copy, amazing circulation and absolute honesty of the Bible?

#### A. Its care and copy

No book in history has been copied as many times with as much care as has been the Word of God. The Talmud lists the following rules for copying the Old Testament:

1. The parchment had to be made from the skin of a clean animal, prepared by a Jew only, and had to be fastened by strings from clean animals.
2. Each column must have no less than 48 or more than 60 lines.
3. The ink must be of no other color than black, and had to be prepared according to a special recipe.
4. No word nor letter could be written from memory; the scribe must have an authentic copy before him, and he had to read and pronounce aloud each word before writing it.
5. He had to reverently wipe his pen each time before writing the Word of God, and had to wash his whole body before writing the sacred name of Jehovah.
6. One mistake on a sheet condemned the sheet; if three mistakes were found on any page, the entire manuscript was condemned.
7. Every word and every letter was counted, and if a letter were omitted, an extra letter inserted, or if one letter touched another, the manuscript was condemned and destroyed at once.

The old rabbi gave the solemn warning to each young scribe: "Take heed how thou dost do thy work, for thy work is the work of heaven; lest thou drop or add a letter of a manuscript and so become a destroyer of the world!"

The scribe was also told that while he was writing if even a king would enter the room and speak with him, the scribe was to ignore him until he finished the page he was working on, lest he make a mistake. In fact, some texts were actually annotated – that is, each letter was individually counted. Thus in copying the Old Testament they would note the letter *aleph* (first letter in the Hebrew alphabet) occurred 42,377 times, and so on.

(*General Biblical Introduction*. H. S. Miller. The Word-Bearer Press. Houghton, N.Y. 1952. p. 185)

According to Westcott and Hort, the points in which we cannot be sure of the original words are microscopic in proportion to the bulk of the whole, some one in one thousand. Thus only one letter out of 1,580 in the Old Testament is open to question, and none of these uncertainties would change in the slightest any doctrinal teaching.

Today there are almost 5,000 ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. This perhaps does not seem like many, until one considers that:

1. Fifteen hundred years after Herodotus wrote his history there was only one copy in the entire world.
2. Twelve hundred years after Plato wrote his classic there was only one manuscript.
3. Today there exist but a few manuscripts of Sophocles, Euripides, Virgil, and Cicero.

B. Its amazing circulation --

When David Hume said, "I see the twilight of Christianity and the Bible," he was much confused, for he could not tell the sunrise from the sunset. Consider the following facts about this amazing Book:

1. There are around 7,000 languages on earth today
2. 392 of these possess the entire Bible
3. 1012 of these possess the New Testament
4. 803 of these have some scriptural portions
5. 1,500 of these now have translation programs in progress
6. However, consider this sad and sobering fact:  
There are still 250 million people on earth with not one verse of scripture in their mother tongue and no translation program yet begun. These people speak over 3000 languages.  
(Statistics given by Wycliffe Translators, Feb. 2003)
7. Only one-half of one percent of all books published survive seven years – Eighty percent of all books are forgotten in one year. For example, let us imagine that during this year 200 new books are published in America. Statistics show that by next year only 40 of these 200 will remain. At the end of the seventh year, of the original 200, only one lonely book will survive.
8. During the Civil War, the ABS produced 7,000 Bibles a day for both sides – When Grant's armies marched through Tennessee, horse-drawn Bible vans followed. In 1864, the Memphis Bible Society sent a shipment of cotton to New York in return for 50,000 Scripture portions.

What other ancient religious book can even remotely be compared to all this? Where could one go today to purchase a copy of Zen Vedas, or the Egyptian Book of the Dead? In fact, dozens of religions that once flourished have simply

disappeared from the face of the earth without leaving the slightest trace. Other ancient religions may be viewed behind glass cases in the rare book section of dusty museums. But the smallest child can walk into almost any dime store in America and pick up a copy of the Word of God.

C. The absolute honesty

Perhaps no other single statement so completely summarizes the Bible as does the following: "The Bible is not a book that man *could* write if he *would*, or would write if he *could*." Let us analyze this one section at a time.

"Man could not write the Bible if he would." Even if a man had all the necessary spirituality, he could not know the facts involved in the historical, scientific, and prophetic statements we have previously already seen in the Bible. Thus, without God's direction the Bible is not a book that man could write if he would.

"Man would not write the Bible if he could." Suppose God would give sinful man all the necessary facts and abilities to write the Bible. What then? Man still *would* not write it correctly if he *could*. Note the following reasons:

1. Because of the bad things God writes about some of his friends – Here five men immediately come to mind. Most of these individuals are mentioned in the Faith Hall of Fame (Hebrews 11).
  - Noah – Indeed a man of God. He walked with God; he was a just man (Gen. 6:9), and he obeyed God (Heb. 11:7). Yet after the flood this great hero of the faith gets dead drunk and exposes his nakedness and shame to his entire family (Gen. 9:20-24). Surely a mere human author would not have written all this.
  - Moses – The meekest man in all the earth during his time (Num. 12:3), and a leader who singled-handedly led an entire nation of enslaved Hebrews out of captivity in Egypt. But en route to Palestine we read of his anger and direct disobedience to the clearly revealed word of God. (See Num. 20:7-12.) Surely man would have eliminated this part of Moses' record.
  - David – Without exception the grandest human king whoever sat upon a throne. God himself would testify that here was a man after his own heart (see 1 Sam. 13:14; 16:7, 12-13). David's fearlessness (1 Sam. 17:34-36, 49), love for God (Psa. 18; 103; etc.), and kindness (1 Sam. 24:6-7) were universally known. But in 2 Samuel 11 this same king is accurately accused of lust, adultery, lying, and cold-blooded murder. Who but God would write in such a manner?
  - Elijah – Few other Old Testament prophets are as colorful and exciting as Elijah the Tishbite. In 1 Kings 18 he champions the cause of God against

450 priests of Satan, but in the very next chapter he is pictured as running for his very life from a mere woman.

- Peter – self-appointed spokesman for Christ who so confidently assured the Savior that *“though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended”* (Matt. 26:33). But in the hour of Jesus’ great need we read of Peter: *“Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man”* (Matt. 26:74).
2. Because of the good things God writes about some of his enemies – On TV the bad guys wear black hats and never do anything good, while the good guys wear white hats and rarely do anything wrong. But not in the Bible. As we have already seen, on many occasions God records bad things about the white hats, and he often mentions good things about the black hats. This can be seen in the accounts of Esau (Gen. 33), Artaxerxes (Neh. 2), Darius (Dan. 6), Gamaliel (Acts 5:34-39), Julius (Acts 27:1-3), etc.

The point of all the above is simply this – the Bible is *not* an edited book. God literally “tells it like it is.” Human authors, however sincere, simply do not consistently write this way.

3. Because of certain doctrines repugnant to the natural mind – Many examples could be listed here, but the following three will demonstrate this:
  - The doctrine of eternal hell (See Rev. 14:10-11.)
  - The doctrine of man’s total helplessness (See Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 7:18.)
  - The doctrine of final judgment upon saved and unsaved (See 1 Cor. 3:9-15; Rev. 20:11-15.)