

# Back to the Bible

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The Bible has been translated into 1,250 languages and dialects, making it available to about 95% of the world's population. It is the best-distributed book in the world with perhaps 150 million copies distributed annually.

In spite of this, pagan religions are gaining in the world. Communism has captured one-third of the earth in less than 50 years. The United Nations reportedly no longer classifies the United States as a "Christian" nation. The American Bible Society estimates that 50 million Americans do not own a Bible. Even those who have Bibles and allegedly believe in them seem to have lost touch with the Biblical message. It is appropriate to question, "Why?"

## Why Is This Modern World Retreating from The Bible?

Dr. Alan Richardson, in the book, *Cambridge History of the Bible*, speaks of a "gradual decay of the ordinary Christian's sense that he can read the Bible for himself without an interpreter and discover its unambiguous meaning." He further states, "... the Bible has come to be regarded as a book for experts only, requiring elaborate training in linguistic and historical disciplines before it can even be understood." If this is so, then one of history's great ironies is developing. This very contention (that the Bible had to have trained, licensed interpreters) produced the 16th century Reformation. Giving the Bible back to the common man brought death to the Dark Ages. It is passing strange that this ecclesiastical specter haunts, humanity again, now not by coercion, but by apathy and default.

One possible reason for such a retreat from the Bible lies in preachers and religious teachers themselves. By using technical terms understood only by the scholarly, the preacher or teacher may leave the impression that one must be a degreed linguistic scholar to understand the Biblical message at all. Who can deny that the Word of God has frequently become the playground for hazy and often unimportant speculations by ecclesiastical doctors, sometimes themselves infidels? This is not to oppose education, but to condemn the wrong use of it. The preacher should **illuminate** rather than obscure the text.

Men are asking if the Bible really applies to modern circumstances. He has lost that awareness of the relevancy of the Biblical message to his everyday life that was felt even a generation ago. Bill Banowsky has captured the modern attitude toward the Bible well as he says:

Its obscure message makes adequate fodder for the Sunday morning sermon, but hardly qualifies as a pertinent issue in the Monday morning business deal – or the Saturday night date – or the April tax return.

We can accurately attribute the present moral decline in our nation to the attitude that the Bible is not so much a book of fixed moral standards, as it is a theoretical source book for out-of-touch theologians.

### **To Whom and to What Is the Biblical Message Addressed?**

The Bible was not addressed to the intellectual community. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek, the common language of the first century Roman world. While it was addressed to the “man on the street,” this carries no implication that it is intellectually unrespectable. Anyone who has read it much knows that it contains some material that the genius cannot fathom. Paul pictured the Corinthian church as “not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble” (1 Cor. 1:26), yet he wrote two lengthy epistles to them, expecting them to understand them. “The common people heard Him (Jesus) gladly” (Mark 12:37) well states the true principle that the Bible is addressed to the masses.

The reason why people thronged to hear Jesus is because His message dealt with their needs. If the New Testament is written **to** the common man, it is also written **for** him. Paul was conscious of this purpose when he wrote, “I had rather speak five words with my understanding, [i.e. that listeners can understand] that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Cor. 14:19 ASV). Thus the majority of Scripture is within grasp of the ordinary person’s comprehension and self-application.

### **The Bible Well States Its Own Case of Worth to Mankind.**

Paul wrote “... We speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth ...” (1 Cor. 2:13). This, with many other Scriptures, affirms it to be from God. The documentary evidence is too massive and strong, the centuries and storms it has withstood too long and hard, and its internal qualities too convincing to allow us to conclude otherwise. It is our only source of pre-historic information – a letter from Heaven.

Paul also wrote “...[T]he world through its wisdom knew not God, [but] it was God’s good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). All nature says there is an all-powerful, intelligent Creator, but only the Bible reveals His love, His mercy, His will, His salvation.

Jesus said, "...these [Scriptures] are they which bear witness of me" (John 5:39 ASV). Through uninspired history we could know that a "Jesus" lived in Judea long ago, but how could we know His mission, Messiahship, or message without the Bible?

The Bible is the source of the knowledge of honorable living. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Man has no "inner light" to guide him, but he is a product of his teaching. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105 ASV). The Bible is the sourcebook of all principles that help us live truly better.

It is the source of faith and salvation. We may try to ignore, forget, deny, or overcome sin, but it is still our universal malady. We desperately need a remedy. Jesus the Christ has provided it through the Gospel. "It [the Gospel] is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). It is the source of that belief necessary to salvation (Rom. 10:17). It tells one what to do to be saved: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16a).

The Bible is the standard of judgment. Jesus declared, "The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12: 48). It fixes upon man responsibility for his own behavior, provides the remedy for sin, the plan for righteous living, and calls him into account for his bodily life.

## Conclusion

Modern man is plagued with doubt, loneliness, immorality, and fear. It is little wonder that he is thus burdened, for on life's stormy voyage he has thrown chart and compass overboard. In ignoring the Bible, he has lost touch with absolute standards, placing himself at the mercy of every destructive wind that blows.

The urgent need of today's world is not more social equality, federal handouts, higher education, increased food supplies, or deeper space probes. Nor is it for more "church services." Never has man gone to church so much and known so little of the Bible. The real need is for professed "believers" in God, Christ, and the Bible to submerge themselves in the plain teaching of Scripture and fashion their lives after its demands. It is a foregone conclusion that unbelievers will never pay any attention to the Bible until believers begin doing so.

As the Bible provided faith, hope, purpose, and encouragement for the ages of the past, so it will for ours, if we but have the courage to go **back to the Bible**.

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