

'The Bible' Miniseries Ignites Scripture-Based Television Trend

The enormous success of *The Bible* miniseries on the History Channel has left many production houses scrambling to get more movies/shows based on Scripture in production.

The record-setting ratings give the general faith community something to cheer about after several years of disturbing trends: overall decrease in church attendance, an increase in those claiming no religious affiliation and a perception that religious people are intolerant and out of touch with mainstream values.

In spite of the 11.7 million viewers that tuned into the series finale and the half-million DVD units sold within its first week of release, the real question is: Do people believe these Bible stories to be fact or fiction?

Are they merely mythological stories that Bronze Age people constructed to communicate their culture and beliefs, or are they historical events that actually happened?

Remember, plenty of fictional series today get massive audiences like *Iron Man* and *The Walking Dead*. Ratings alone are not enough to validate the stories told in *The Bible*.

Instead, we need to look at the evidence. I believe, and there is a great amount of supporting evidence to verify it, that the stories in the Bible are true.

Just look at the event called Easter, recently celebrated around the world by more than 2 billion people. Is the resurrection of Jesus Christ a nice story that communicates some allegorical message or is (and was) it a true historical event?

Let's start with the most logical piece of historical evidence: 2,000 years ago a man named Jesus actually lived. Even popular Bible critic Bart Erhman concedes that Jesus indeed lived.

The four Gospels are the primary records that tell of Jesus' words and actions. They all agree that He lived, died by crucifixion and rose again from the grave.

It was this story—a news story, not a bedtime story—that launched the Christian faith three days after Jesus' death.

It was because people knew that dead people usually stay dead that they believed Jesus' physical appearance just days after His death was indeed a miracle.

Ten of the 12 original followers of Christ would die the death of a martyr (not taking others lives, but being put to death for their faith) because they testified that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

If something like the resurrection can be seen as the best explanation of the empty tomb after Jesus' death, then all the other miracle stories become plausible.

"New atheists," such as biologist Richard Dawkins and physicist Lawrence Krauss, are quick to hurl the assertion that the Bible is a book of fairy tales, dismissing the resurrection as one of them.

As far as a fairy tale, a simple week long trip to Israel would quickly and dramatically demonstrate to the rational mind that the people and places mentioned in the Bible are real. You will find very few people living in Israel today, religious or secular, that think Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus were fictitious characters.

Overall, when you compare the Bible to other ancient documents it stands head and shoulders above the rest in terms of

historical accuracy and archaeological verifiability. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls showed that the content of the Bible had been transmitted faithfully throughout the centuries.

Its extraordinary impact is felt in virtually every aspect of our life and culture, from education—106 of the first 108 universities in America, like Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, were founded with a primary goal of teaching and promoting the Christian faith—to our nation's view of helping the poor and the needy.

The countless hospitals and charities that have dramatically helped millions in their suffering and pain testify to the power of its principles and teachings. Far from religious faith being a bad thing, as Dawkins and his followers suggest, it has been a source of great hope and healing for billions.

Remember, the Bible is not just one book; it is a collection of 66 books, written by more than 40 different authors over a period of 1,600 years. The amazing consistency of its message to mankind points to the reality that it is not just a book that man wrote about God, but one that God has inspired and given to mankind as a great gift of light in the darkness.

Given the evidence, what do you think? Is the historically accurate text that our nation is built upon a book of fairy tales and myths? Or does the single, greatest book ever written, whose timeless stories brought in millions of viewers, have the benefit of being true?

You decide.

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