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Question 101 - What supernatural elements may be seen regarding the life transforming power of the Bible?

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101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

101. What supernatural elements may be seen regarding the life transforming power of the Bible?

According to an ancient proverb, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." So it is. Undoubtedly the greatest proof of all that the Bible is indeed God's Word is its amazing ability to change corrupt humanity.

It is said that a socialist once stood on a soapbox in New York and, pointing to an old ragged bum, proudly announced, "Socialism will put a new suit of clothes on that old man there." As he stepped down, a Christian mounted the box and proclaimed, "The Bible will put a new man in that old suit of clothes there."

An atheist once sneeringly asked a new convert the question, "Do you believe Jesus actually turned water into wine?" The convert answered: "Yes, I believe he did! But let me tell you something. For years I was a hopeless drunkard. All my money went for booze. But then God's Word gripped my soul, and I'm here to say that Jesus performed an even greater miracle, for he turned wine into milk for my children!"

Examples from among the multiplied millions that could be offered to demonstrate the power of this Book of God.

A. As illustrated by Henry Stanley:

Why is it that, when Henry Stanley journeyed into the tangled forest of Africa to find David Livingstone, he started out with 180 pounds of books, but as hunger and illness forced the sacrifice of unessentials, he discarded volume after volume until all he had was an edition of Shakespeare, a copy of Carlyle, two treatises on navigation, and the Bible; and concerning these five books he said on his return to the United States, "Poor Shakespeare was afterwards burned up; Carlyle and the navigation books were abandoned by the way, and I had only the Bible left!" During this time, Stanley read his Bible through three times. He is quoted as follows: "During my first attack of African fever, I took up the Bible to while away the tedious hours. I read Job, and then the Psalms. Its powerful verses had a different meaning in the silence of the wilds. I came to feel a strange glow . . . Alone in my tent I flung myself on my knees and poured out my soul utterly in secret prayer to Him."

(The Reason for Our Hope, Vernon Grounds, p. 47)

B. As illustrated by Captain Bligh:

Probably there is no more sensational example of the life-transforming power of the Bible than the unbelievable story of Mutiny on the Bounty. In 1887 the Bounty, under Captain Bligh, set sail for the island of Tahiti in the South Seas.

After a voyage of ten months, the ship arrived at her destination, and further six months were spent collecting palm saplings. The sailors meanwhile had become so attached to the native girls that upon receiving the order to embark, mutinied, set the captain and a few men adrift in an open boat, and returned to the island. Captain Bligh, however, survived his ordeal and eventually arrived home in England. A punitive expedition was sent out, which captured 14 of the mutineers. But nine of them had transferred to another island, where they formed a new colony. Here, in the language of the Encyclopedia Britannica, they degenerated so fast and became so fierce as to make the life of the colony a hell on earth. The chief reason for this was the distillation of whiskey from a native plant. Quarrels, orgies, and murders were a common feature of their life. Finally all the men except one were killed or had died off. Alexander Smith was left alone with a crowd of native women and half-breed children. Then a strange thing happened. In a battered chest, he found a Bible. He read it, believed it, and began to live it. Determining to make amends for his past evil life, he gathered the women and children around him and taught them too. Time rolled on. The children grew up and became Christians. The community prospered exceedingly. Nearly 20 years later an American ship visited the island and brought back to Europe and England word of its peaceful state. The British government took no further action. There was no need. The island was a Christian community. There was no disease, no insanity, no crime, and no illiteracy, and no strong drink. Life and property were safe, and the moral standards of the people were as high as anywhere in the world. It was a veritable Utopia on a small scale. What had brought about this astounding transformation? Just the reading of a book, and that book was the Bible. (ibid, p. 89)

C. As illustrated by Billy Graham:

Among the many thousands of conversions in the London Crusade were those of a medical doctor and the man who sat next to him in the arena. Before the service began, the two strangers engaged in conversation, criticizing the campaign and expressing the utmost skepticism. As Graham preached, throwing out one truth of Scripture after another, the doctor was gripped by an unseen power. When the invitation was given, he said to the man next to him. "I don't know about you, but I'm going forward to receive Christ." The other hesitated a moment, then reached into his pocket and replied, "I'm going too, and here's your wallet. I'm a pickpocket." (*The Wonder of the Word*. G. M. Day. p. 28)

D. As illustrated by Captain Mitsuo Fuchida:

When Captain Mitsuo Fuchida, the Japanese squadron commander who led the air raid on Pearl Harbor in 1941, and Jacob DeShazer, one of the famed Doolittle flyers who participated in the bombing of Tokyo in 1942, sat on a platform together in a Christian evangelistic meeting in Japan they created a great

sensation. And so they should! Bitter national enemies who had delighted in sending fiery death and destruction to each other, were united in a tremendous cooperative effort for Christian evangelism. (ibid, p. 30)

- E. As illustrated by Augustine: "Shortly after his new birth experience, Augustine met a prostitute on the street. Pretending not to see her, he attempted to pass by without recognition, but she called, 'Augustine, it is I.' He turned to her then and answered, 'Yes, but it is not I.' " (ibid, p. 34).
- F. As illustrated by Sir Walter Scott: There is not a more familiar story in the annals of literature than the story that describes the death of the immortal Scot poet and novelist, Sir Walter Scott. As he lay dying he turned to his son-in-law, Lockhart, and said to him, "Son, bring me the Book." There was a vast library in Walter Scott's home and bewildered, the son-in-law said, "Sir, what book?" "Which book?" The dying bard replied, "My son, there is just one Book. Bring me the Book." It is then that Lockhart went to the library and brought to Sir Walter Scott the Bible.

"There's just one book," cried the dying sage,
"Read me the old, old story."
And the winged words that can never age
Wafted him home to glory.
There's just one Book.

There's just one book for the tender years,
One book of love's own guiding,
The little feet through the joys and fears,
The unknown days are hiding
There's just one Book!

There's just one book for the bridal hour,
One book of love's own coining,
Its truths alone lend beauty and power,
To vows that lives are joining.
There's just one Book!

There's just one book for life's gladness,
One book for the toilsome days.
One book that can cure life's madness,
One book that can voice life's praise.
There's just one Book!

There's just one book for the dying,

One book for the starting tears,
And one for the soul that is going home,
For the measureless years.
There's just one Book!
(*The Bible for Today's World*. W. A. Criswell. p. 25)

G. As illustrated by the Apostle Paul: According to his own testimony, Paul was the “*chief of sinners*” (1 Tim. 1:13). To show this was no empty claim, Paul sadly relates his pre-Christian sinful activities:

- a. He took care of the coats of Stephen's murderers as they stoned him (Acts 7:58).
- b. He arrested Christians and threw them into prison (Acts 8:3; 22:4).
- a. He beat Christians (Acts 22:19).
- b. He compelled them to use abusive language (Acts 26:11).
- c. He persecuted them unto death (Acts 22:4).
- d. He attempted to destroy the Christian faith (Gal. 1:23).
- e. He wasted the church of God and made havoc of it (Gal. 1:13; Acts 8:3).
This word *havoc* occurs but once here in the Greek New Testament and refers to a wild boar which charges into a vineyard and viciously uproots it. But then this ravaging wolf heard the voice of the Shepherd and became one of God's best sheepdogs.

H. As illustrated by the Vikings. Dr. D. James Kennedy writes:

“Perhaps the greatest example of the transforming power of the gospel is the Vikings, who were particularly fierce. These ancestors of the Scandinavian peoples stopped their plundering raids only when the gospel of Christ took hold in their hearts. Had Jesus never come, there is no guarantee these people would ever have stopped their brutality.

In the ninth and tenth centuries the Vikings, who were marauding adventurers, terrorized much of the coastline of Europe in their quest for plunder. They would plant their crops in the spring, then go raiding, and then return for the harvest. The Christians in the pillaged lands would pray, ‘God, save us from the Norsemen [Vikings].’ Religious institutions (e.g., monasteries) were a particularly favorite target of the Vikings because they often housed treasures and were often poorly defended. The Vikings pillaged, raped, and killed men, women, and even children. They would systematically put to the torch what was left. Their fighting men, *berserkers*, were so fierce in battle that our word *berserk* comes from them. What changed this horrible scourge of humanity? Jesus Christ did. The gospel managed to penetrate even the Vikings – not without some resistance – and not even without some violence on the part of the new converts who didn't know better! Nonetheless, over time, many of the Scandinavians became true Christians, and so the Vikings stopped their terrible raids. Virtually every Norwegian, Dane,

Swede, and even many British are descendants of these formerly fierce and warlike people.”

(What If Jesus Had Never Been Born? Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nashville. 1994. p. 164)

I. As illustrated by Mel Trotter:

Mel Trotter gave a whole new meaning to the term “no good.” He was so “no good” it was almost written on his forehead. He was the very scum of the scum. He abused his family. He neglected his children. He was fired from jobs. He was a drunkard in the gutter and would do anything for a drink. In fact, one day he came home and found his little daughter very seriously ill. He was so “concerned” that he took off her shoes and went out and sold them for a drink! When he returned, he found that his little girl was dead. He was so overwhelmed by remorse that he said he was going to end his life. He made his way across one of the worst parts of Chicago, to throw himself into Lake Michigan. But as he passed down the street, he could hear someone preaching over a loudspeaker. He stepped into the building’s doorway and heard a man talking about Jesus Christ, who loved sinners. He said to himself, “Can it be that there is anyone who could love someone like me?” He stood transfixed by that message of love that he heard. All of the grasp of that addiction suddenly was loosened. Mel Trotter was set free.

He later established a great mission for the down-and-outers in downtown Grand Rapids, and ultimately established fifty more missions around the nation. Tens of thousands of drunks and ne’er-do-wells had their lives transformed by Christ through Trotter. Take Christ out of the picture, and all you end up with is a drunken suicide. (ibid, pp. 194, 195)

J. As illustrated by H. L. Hastings:

The morality of any society can be easily judged by the view it holds of human life. In 1844, H. L. Hastings visited the Fiji Islands. He found there that life was very cheap and that it was held in low esteem. You could buy a human being for \$7.00 or one musket. That was cheaper than a cow. After having bought him you could work him, whip him, starve him, or eat him, according to your preference – and many did the latter. He returned a number of years later and found that the value of human life had risen tremendously. One could not buy a human being for \$7.00 to beat or eat. In fact, you could not buy one for seven million dollars. Why? Because across the Fiji Islands there were 1,200 Christian chapels where the gospel of Christ had been proclaimed, and people had been taught that we are not our own; that we have been purchased with a price, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. (ibid, p. 27)

K. As illustrated by Chuck Colson:

Chuck Colson is a marvelous example of a life changed for the better, thanks to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Known as Nixon's "hatchet man," Colson was a high-powered attorney who joined the Nixon team as special counsel to the president. Colson had access to a man who made himself accessible to very few. Colson will be the first to tell you that he was no saint in those days and that his creed was anything and everything for the president, no matter whom it might hurt. He was an active participant in the many dirty tricks of the only U. S. president who had to resign because of dirty tricks. If you haven't read his "tell-all" classic, *Born Again*, you are missing out on a terrific book. In other books on Watergate, Colson consistently comes off as somewhat of a heel – prior to his conversion.

Today, this very same Colson heads a ministry he started that preaches the gospel to tens of thousands of inmates. Prison Fellowship, which grew out of Colson's own jailhouse experience, is now a world-wide outreach, located in northern Virginia, that helped more than 100,000 prisoners last year. It ministers to them in prison and helps them get readjusted out of prison and back into society. Prison Fellowship even provides Christmas gifts for the families of inmates.

Many people today know Colson also for his magnificent books and his inspiring talks and daily radio commentary, *BreakPoint with Church Colson*. Colson's genius refreshes people every day worldwide; take Christ out of the equation, and all we're left with is an evil genius. (ibid, pp. 198, 199)

L. As illustrated by the Bridge Over the River Kwai:

You may recall a few decades ago the Academy Award-winning motion picture *The Bridge Over the River Kwai*, starring William Holden and Alec Guinness. You remember what happened. The whole battalion of British soldiers was captured by the Japanese in Burma. In the concentration camp, the Japanese systematically overworked the captives, many of whom died.

According to Hollywood, the Japanese commander was initially unsuccessful in his attempt to get these prisoners of war to build a bridge over the River Kwai. Meanwhile, he tried to break the will and spirit of the chief British officer, but was unsuccessful at this too. Although it greatly hurt his pride, the desperate Japanese commander finally put the British officer in charge of building the bridge, and because of that, the bridge was finally built. The men even went out whistling as they went to build the bridge . . . so said Hollywood. But is that what really happened?

Long after the movie had come out, I spoke to the man who had commanded those British forces in Burma. At that time, he was the chaplain of Princeton University, and he had written a book about his experiences, called *Through the Valley of the Kwai*. He told me, heartbrokenly, what Hollywood had done to the truth.

Here is the real story of the bridge over the River Kwai. The captives had been reduced to savagery. They were starving. They were snapping for every crust of bread like animals. And then the British commander discovered in one of their backpacks a New Testament. He began to read it. As he read it, the wonder of the love of Christ began to fill his soul, and he surrendered his life to the Savior and called on Him for His grace and help. He was transformed.

He began to read that New Testament to his men each day. One after another became transformed until virtually the entire camp was transformed by the gospel of Christ. These animal-like men began to save their crusts of bread to give to those who were weaker and sicker than they were. That camp was transformed by Christ, who makes all things new. There was not even a hint of these events in the Hollywood version – but that’s the real story.

(What If The Bible Had Never Been Written? D. James Kennedy. Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nashville. 1998. pp. 35, 36)

M. As illustrated by Terra del Fuego:

Terra del Fuego is another case in point. Back in 1832, when the noted evolutionist, Charles Darwin, made his publicized trip around the world in *The Beagle*, he called it the most savage spot he had ever beheld and confessed to a helplessness in putting the barbarous practices of the inhabitants in writing. On the basis of his testimony, the British admiralty issued orders that no ships should stop there in the future.

However, there was a fellow named Thomas Bridges. As an infant, he had been found abandoned beside a bridge in England early one morning, wrapped only in a newspaper. Since it was St. Thomas’ Day, they gave him the name Thomas; and because he was found beside a bridge, they also named him Bridges. Raised in an orphanage, he eventually came to know Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

Grown to manhood, he applied to the English Missionary Society and was sent to Terra del Fuego, the land Darwin had vowed never to place foot on again. Bridges, with the enabling help of the Spirit of God, put the language of the natives into writing, gave them the entire Bible in that language, and revolutionized that corner of the world. The miracle of transformation was so tremendous that even Charles Darwin acknowledged it with a financial contribution to the English Missionary Society. Oh, the power of this Wonder Book to transform lives!

N. As illustrated by Martin Luther, and John Wesley:

Luther, crushed by the burden of his sin and exhausted from his useless mortification, crawled on his knees up Pilate’s fabulous staircase at Rome. One simple word from Scripture suddenly seized him with superhuman power: “*The*

righteous shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). That word sufficed; the Reformation came into existence, giving to mankind the Bible, the Saviour, the liberty of the children of God and assurance of eternal life.

Wesley had been seeking to lead a *methodical* life of devotion (origin of the word "Methodist"). After studying theology at Oxford, he set out to do missionary work in America, although he had not yet come to any assurance of his own salvation. But on May 24, 1738, God spoke to him two different times through verses from the Bible (2 Peter 1:4 and Psalm 130). He said that that evening he went very unwillingly to a meeting on Aldersgate Street, where someone was reading Luther's preface to the epistle to the Romans. "About a quarter before nine," he wrote, "while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

(The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture. Rene' Pache. Moody Press. Chicago. p. 288)

O. As illustrated by James C. Hefley:

James C. Hefley provides a telling anecdote about the end of cannibalism in one tribe because of Christ. During World War II, on a remote island in the Pacific, an American G.I. met a national who could speak English carrying a Bible. "The soldier pointed to the Bible and grinned knowingly. 'We educated people don't put much faith in that Book anymore,' he said. The islander grinned back. 'Well, it's a good thing for you that we do,' he said while patting his stomach, 'or else, you'd be in here by now.' "

P. As illustrated by Robert. L. Sumner:

A biblical conversion transformed the cursing John Bunyan into the author of a *Pilgrim's Progress*. It transformed a drinking, slave-trading John Newton into the penman of an "Amazing Grace." It transformed a stealing George Whitefield into one of the most powerful evangelists of all time. It transformed a burglarizing Jerry McAuley, "the River Rat," into a tender, broken compassionate winner of skidrow's fallen. It transformed a delirium tremen Sam Hadley into a trophy of grace whose single motive was winning others to Christ. It transformed an alcoholic Mel Trotter, who would steal the shoes off his dead baby's body to buy booze, into the founder of a chain of rescue missions.

Paul testified: "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief*" (1 Tim. 1:15). And in verse 13 of that passage he had declared: "*Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*"

Even atheists and infidels must close their mouths when confronted with the wonder of the Bible's transforming conversion power. Perhaps you have heard about D. L. Moody's response when challenged to debate an atheist on the West Coast. The evangelist agreed to do so if the atheist would consent to one additional condition. Moody offered to bring 100 ex-criminals, ex-alcoholics, ex-dope addicts and ex-derelects who had been saved and transformed by the liberating power of Jesus Christ – and who would testify to it – for every five the atheist could bring who would testify that atheism had liberated him. The challenger called the whole thing off.

(The Wonder of the Word of God. Biblical Evangelism Press. Brownsburg, Indiana. 1969. p. 30)

Q. As illustrated by Dr. Walter Wilson:

This great soul-winning medical doctor was attending a convention in a large city when he struck up a conversation with an extremely obese salesman. As the two departed Dr. Wilson asked the man if he would be kind enough to read Leviticus 3:16 from the Gideon Bible in his room. Somewhat reluctantly he agreed to this strange request.

Thus, just before retiring the huge salesman found the assigned verse and read the following words:

“And the priest shall burn them upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savour: all the fat is the LORD's” (Lev. 3:16).

At first he was confused, then angry. Was this Wilson's idea of a sick joke? But later in the darkness of that hotel room his thoughts seemed directed again and again to the last six words of the verse: *“all the fat is the Lord's.”*

Strange as it may seem, the Holy Spirit used this totally unorthodox method of soul winning to lead the salesman to Christ.

Sharing his testimony the next morning with Wilson, he said:

“Well, I thought that if the fat did indeed belong to God, then I was already 95% His and I might as well give Him my sinful heart also!”

R. As illustrated by William Borden:

In the late 1800s, William Borden was graduated from high school. While his family was wealthy, he was not the son and heir to the Borden dairy fortune. His father sent him, along with a servant, on a trip around the world. As he left for his ship, his father gave him a new Bible and the boy read it during his travels across Asia, Africa and the Middle East. William's heart was grabbed by what he saw of the teeming millions without Christ and without hope. He wrote his father that he intended to serve Christ on the mission field. As he thought of the danger and

sacrifice ahead of him, he wrote in the back of his Bible, "No Reserves." When William returned to the States he enrolled in Yale to prepare for the ministry. Graduating with honors, he entered Princeton Seminary, turning down many impressive offers and the opportunity to replace his father in a few years. As he entered Seminary he wrote two more words in his well-worn Bible: "No Retreats."

William finished seminary three years later and was accepted as a missionary to China. Saying his goodbyes to family and friends, he sailed for the Orient, stopping in Egypt for further preparation. While in Egypt he became ill and died a month later. Dead at 25 years of age.

When William's father sorted through his son's personal belongings, he thumbed through his well-used Bible and found two more words his son had written on his deathbed: "No Regrets." No reserves, no retreats, and no regrets! What a way to live and die!