**THE GREATEST INVENTION IN HISTORY**

***Our Greatest Treasure***

When God told Adam and Eve that man would “*have dominion over*” the creation He had just made, humans have been in an Invention Mode (Gen. 1:26,28).

Being cast out of the paradise God had made for them, with all of its creature comforts, we now live in a world in which “*the creation was subjected to futility… for we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now*” (Rom. 8:20-22). Life on earth is hard. It so often seems as if we are like the mythical Sisyphus. Remember him? He was punished by the head god Zeus, forcing him to roll a boulder up a hill for eternity. Every time he neared the top of the boulder it would roll back to the bottom, causing him to start over again. Do you ever feel like that? Life is hard.

That said, man invents creature comforts in an effort to make life just a little easier. For example, the flint-and-rock to start a fire to keep us warm or cook our food. Or, the tackle-and-pulley to make it easier to lift things and build tall buildings (I can only imagine the hernias men endured building the Tower of Babel or the Pyramids). Or, the wheel to make transportation of people and things more efficient.

I would actually love to see a timeline of the greatest inventions throughout history in an effort to document God’s command for man to “*have dominion over*” the animals and earth He created. What I do have is one man’s research of what he determined to be the greatest inventions of the past 1000 years. Robert J. Gordon, a highly acclaimed economist at Northwestern University, gives us his studied conclusion:

#10 Anesthesia – 1844 by Horace Wells – great leap forward in medicine & surgery
#9 Gas-powered tractor – 1892 by John Froelich – started agricultural revolution

#8 Airplane – 1903 by Wright Brothers – move people / products quickly

#7 Computer – 1939 by John Atanasoff, etc. – transformed business world

#6 Vaccination – 1796 by Edward Jenner – protected masses from deadly disease

#5 Radio / TV – 1895 / 1926 by Guglielmo Marconi & John Baird – world is smaller

#4 Telephone – 1876 by Alexander G. Bell – spread communication around the world

#3 Automobile – 1885 by Karl Benz – increased personal mobility and freedom

#2 Electric Light – 1879 by Thomas Edison – powered infinite social changes

Now, what would be your guess was the greatest invention that changed the world and the lives of men over the past millennium? Drum roll please; or, if you like, whistle the Jeopardy tune to add to the suspense … … … … … … … … …

I’ll give you a hint. The byproduct of this greatest of all inventions is found throughout your house. It is all around you. You see it every day, all day. It has changed your life in ways you have probably never thought about, just as it has changed the world. I would rank this invention above even running water, plumbing, electricity and fire. I believe God’s providence brought it into existence at just the right moment in history.

Ok. The Jeopardy music has stopped. The drums have ceased. The answer is …

Johannes Gutenberg’s printing press!

From 1436 to 1450 the German goldsmith strove heroically to find a way to take the ancient Chinese art of wooden blocks pressed on paper with ink and transform it into a mechanical press that could mass produce literature for entire populations to read. While the vast majority of the world was still illiterate, there were educated men that could read aloud to the masses. Therefore, Johannes Gutenberg helped begin the great religious Reformation Movement by using his press to print the very first book in history … the Bible! It took him three years to print 200 copies, but it began a revolution that forever changed the world.

In 1517 Martin Luther nailed his famous 95 theses to the church door at Wittenberg, Germany to challenge the Catholic Church, thus beginning the Protestant Reformation. He later said this: “Printing is the ultimate gift of God, and the greatest one!” Luther became the very first best-selling author. Just 17 days after he had nailed his challenge to the Catholic hierarchy, his document was being printed in London and then distributed throughout Europe. His German New Testament sold 5000 copies in just two weeks! From 1518 to 1525 Luther’s writings accounted for a third of all books sold in Germany, with his Bible going through an astonishing 430 editions!

Think about what Johannes Gutenberg started. Although his press was later seized, and he died penniless, he had forever opened the eyes and hearts of the world by printing the Word of God for the common man to read. No longer were men dependent on knowing the Bible through the interpretations of parish priests who “*twisted the scriptures* *to their own destruction*” (2 Pet. 3:16). Now they could hear God’s Word in the public square, or perhaps even learn to read the Bible for themselves! They could now compare what they heard in the churches with what they read in the scriptures. The Reformation Movement led to the Restoration Movement (1800-present) which called men to “Speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent.” For the first time they could read: “*If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God*” (I Pet. 4:11). They could also read: “*You have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation*” (2 Tim. 3:15).

Today the whole Bible has been translated into over 704 languages, which covers 5.7 billion people (there are 7.8 billion on earth today, thus about 2 billion are without the full Bible). But the N.T. is available in another 1,551 languages, reaching 815 million more souls. On top of that portions of the N.T. are now available in yet another 1,160 languages spoken by 458 million. Thus, all told, 6.9 billion of the 7.8 billion people on earth have, in part, or in whole, the Bible in their native tongue. Think of this: over 80% of the entire population of the earth has the full Bible printed in their own tongue! 88% of the world has at least part of it in their own language. The Wycliffe Bible Translators hope by 2025 to have at least part of the Bible printed in all 6,909 languages of the world! Since “*the seed is the word of God*” (Lk. 8:11), wherever it is planted on good soil it will produce Christians. This concept just staggers my imagination!

I wish Johannes Gutenberg could have lived to see what his invention had accomplished in fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). When I hold my Bible and read it in clear type I realize what a gift I have that billions throughout history did not have.

I would sacrifice all other inventions (including fire) for the precious treasure I now hold in my hand… my Bible. Brethren, please, don’t take that holy Book of books for granted. Many gave their lives, including Mr. Gutenberg, so that we may have not just one, but many, translations in our own tongue.

Let us sing, “Give me the Bible, holy message shining…” - Rick