Week of Prayer 2024: Monday

Head: No Other Book Like This Book

The Uniqueness of the Bible

**By Daniel Duda**

In 1800 a 15-year-old Welsh girl named Mary Jones walked barefoot 26 miles (42 kilometers) through the rugged terrain of north Wales to buy a Welsh Bible. Mary had such a strong desire to own her own Bible, in her own language, that she worked hard and saved every cent she earned for six years. Then she had to trek for a long distance to buy it! Her inspirational story led to establishing Bible societies that print and distribute Bibles across the world.

Today you and I live in a different world than Mary Jones. But we still consider the Bible to be a unique book. Of course, all religions have their holy writings and consider them special. Why do we believe the Bible is unique?

**The Bible as God’s Revelation**

Throughout the centuries people have identified three sources of knowledge: mind, experience, and God’s revelation. The human mind can be the source of amazing discoveries that make our lives easier and move humanity forward. People, through their personal experiences, can broaden their perspectives on life and society and improve the quality of their own life and of humanity. Yet though the human mind and experience are useful *tools* for understanding the world around us, because of the effects of sin they are insufficient as *sources* to grasp ultimate realities. We did not create ourselves, so we cannot create the ultimate meaning of things. We need God’s revelation (Deut. 29:29).

Where there is love, where there is relationship, there are words. Therefore, God speaks. That’s why ancient Israel treasured and loved God’s book.

The apostle Paul wrote a classic statement on this: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17, NIV). In other words, the Bible carries God’s authority because it has been uniquely inspired, breathed out, by God.

The Bible is not just a history book but contains powerful truths, which underwrite the work of the Holy Spirit and can help bring us to spiritual maturity. Second Timothy 3 shows how the Holy Spirit uses the Bible in four specific directions:

The Scriptures give us the basic elements of our faith (teaching/doctrine). But when we have broken or missed God’s principles, it brings rectification (rebuking/reproof). That’s why it is important to read the Bible in such a way that we hear even those things that we do not want to hear. It is easy to read the Bible as a confirmation of what we have always believed. But when the Scriptures are properly read, the Holy Spirit can administer to our soul rebuke and correction, truths that change our thinking and behaviour (exhortation). Finally, the Bible also shows us how to maintain God’s principles for living—instructions in righteousness (training).

**The Bible has A Divine-human Character**

As already mentioned, the message of the Bible comes from God, but by necessity, it is expressed by humans with words and thoughts reflecting the place and time of their writing. Different writings clearly reflect the personality of the author. Both these aspects, divine and human, are equally important and must be kept in balance. They need to be distinguished, but they cannot be separated.

Because the Bible is God’s Word, it has eternal meaning, it is addressed to all humanity. It is relevant for every person in every age, place, and culture. That’s why we need to listen to what the Bible says, and obey what it advises.

The human aspect is given by the fact that it was written in a certain time and place, in the language of certain people (Old Testament in Hebrew and Aramaic; New Testament in Greek). Because of this, to a certain extent Scripture reflects the thinking of the authors. Literary genre, style, and vocabulary are different in different parts of the Bible. Some writers even use sources that they themselves didn’t write. Every book of the Bible has therefore a certain specific style.

Because there are no degrees of inspiration (insinuating that some parts are inspired more, others less), we talk about dynamic inspiration rather than verbal (literal dictation). Once we realize that the divine and human aspect are inseparable, we will take these two aspects into account in our study and interpretation. The Bible needs to be studied historically and grammatically (because the document was written in a certain historical time by a certain author), but we cannot remain just at that level, because the Bible is more than just history. It is God’s timeless revelation that addresses every human being until the end of time. That’s the divine aspect of the Bible.

“The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ ”\*

**Our Story is Part of God’s Story**

Seventy percent of the Old Testament and 60 percent of the New Testament came in a narrative form. God chose the story because it has the power to inspire people and carry the meaning better than anything else. This provides a unified focus for 40 Scripture writers. The ultimate problem and the ultimate solution are the same for all writers.

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in *all the Scriptures* concerning himself” (Luke 24:27, NIV).

The word “all” is important here. Jesus did not talk about a few messianic prophetic predictions. What Jesus is saying is “Now you get the whole story. Now you understand it in a way that no one did before. Now you see what it all means, what God has been up to.” Then the Bible story continues with the fulfilment as expressed through the new community (church), until the Day of the Lord and the new creation and eradication of sin.

The only way to redeem a broken story is to embed it in a bigger story. When you read the Bible, you can see your temptations, your fall, your coming out of Egypt, your crossing of Jordan, your wandering in the wilderness, your exile. Jesus opens your eyes, cleanses you. The Bible becomes a living Word in your own experience (Heb. 4:12).

God’s Word accomplishes the creation of life, the conviction of sin, the achievement of hope, brings power in your weakness, provides guidance in darkness. It becomes a lamp to your feet, a light to your path (Ps. 119:105). It is the story that gives your personal story a new meaning. Therefore, you can be a woman, you can be a man, of the Book. We can and need to be the people of the Book!

\* Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. vi.

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Questions for Reflection:

What makes the Bible different from other holy books?

Have you been able to identify with a specific biblical character in your spiritual experience?