

## 04.04.2020 THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE

***“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” Psalm 119:105***

The Bible is the greatest book ever written. In it, God Himself speaks to man. Not only is it a book of divine instruction, it is a book that comforts in sorrow, guides us when perplexed, gives advice for our problems and rebukes our sins. It is Word of God – the written Word of God and comes from the Living Word, Christ Jesus, the ‘Logos’ of God.

*In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1*

The study of the Word must lead us to the Living Word, Christ Jesus. All that the Bible offers - instruction, comfort, guidance, exhortation and salvation- is found in Him. He is the One of whom the Law and Prophets testify. See Luke 24:27, John 5:39, 1 Peter 1: 10-12

The Bible is unlike any other religious book. Despite many authors writing from three continents over nearly two thousand years, it maintains a perfect consistency of message. Its words point unerringly to Christ, whose work on the cross was ordained by God—the true author of the Bible—before the world began. *Tim Chaffey*

### **The Living Word of God**

*Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel, and he said to them: “Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe—all the words of this law. For they are not idle words for you, it is your life...” Deuteronomy 32:45-46*

The great theme of the Bible is Jesus Christ and His work of redemption for mankind. His Person and work are premised, prophesied and pictured in types and symbols in the Old Testament. The gospels reveal His coming to earth, the truth and beauty of His life.. The epistles explain to us the meaning of His death and resurrection. The certainty of His return and victory over Satan is foretold in the book of Revelation.

*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into. 1 Peter 1:10-12*

Every book of the Bible leads us to Jesus Christ and calls us to the obedience of faith. We are called to depend on the Spirit of Christ to give us the strength and power to set our hearts on obeying all the words of this Book – which are ultimately, the words of Christ.

*‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ Matthew 4:4*

### **Who Wrote the Bible, and Where?**

There are 39 books in the Old Testament, written mostly in the Hebrew language (and some in Aramaic). The Hebrew people were the custodians of the Old Testament canon, carefully copying each word from one generation to the next.

Jesus Christ believed the entire Old Testament came from God’s own mouth: *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).*

There are 27 books in the New Testament, all written in the Greek language. Followers of Jesus Christ carefully copied each word from one generation to the next.

40 authors wrote the books of the Bible over a period of 1500 years, spanning the time from Moses to John the apostle.

Jesus Christ said that the Holy Spirit of God would inspire the authors of the New Testament: *“The Spirit of truth . . . will guide you into all truth” (John 16:12–13)*. He told His apostles that their words would have the same authority as His: *“He that hears you hears me” (Luke 10:16)*.

“Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony.

As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life.” *EG White*

### **The Bible as Prophecy**

The Bible is a book of prophecy; nearly 30% of the Bible is prophetic literature. There are books written by major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel) and minor prophets. Apart from these prophets, other authors also prophesied of the Messiah who was to come.

The fulfilment of Bible prophecy is evidence of the Divine origin of the Bible. The prophecies of Daniel span centuries from approximately 605 BC to the time of the end. There are more than 65 prophecies about Christ Jesus the Messiah. Daniel said that Messiah the Prince would *‘Seal up vision and prophecy...’ Daniel 9:24*; i.e. that all vision and prophecy is fulfilled in Christ. God’s solution to the sin problem is fulfilled in Christ – His blood cleanses from sin, His righteousness is offered to us as a free gift and He is our surety in the Judgement.

The fact that the Messianic prophecies were fulfilled with such accuracy gives us utmost confidence that the prophecies of the time of the end will also be fulfilled.

*And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 1 Peter 2:19-21*

### **The Bible as History**

The Bible is a history book; a history of God’s dealings with man. He is our Creator and His purpose for man was that he should reflect the character of God. When we rebelled against Him, God chose to solve the sin problem by sending His Son to redeem us and renew us so that we can once more fulfil God’s original plan for mankind.

*Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness... Genesis 1:26*

*God, has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. 2 Timothy 1:9*

*Messiah the Prince will... finish the transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal up vision and prophecy, and anoint the Most Holy. Daniel 9:24*

*Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. Romans 5:18*

*For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22*

*The last enemy that will be destroyed is death... Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power... Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him that God may be all in all. Corinthians 15:24, 26, 28*

‘God has one plan and one program encompassing all of history, and the Bible describes how He works out His plan over the centuries. Within this plan, Christ is at the centre. The work that Christ accomplished by His life, death, resurrection and ascension represents the fulcrum-point of history.’ *Vern Poythress*

## **The Transforming Power of the Word**

*The Word have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee. Psalm 119:11*

*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12*

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for [c]instruction in righteousness, **that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.** 2 Timothy 3:16, 17*

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history. (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.) *Fundamental Beliefs.*

*The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Psalm 19:7-11*

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## **HOW TO INTERPRET SCRIPTURE**

Since the Bible was written by many different authors over 1500 years and the last author wrote about 2000 years ago, there are problems in understanding the exact meaning of certain passages in the Bible.

This is because there is a gap between the way we think and the words we use today and the thinking and the words used by the Bible writers.

- There are language gaps – differences in meaning of words we use today and what the Bible writers meant when they wrote the words.
- There are cultural gaps – different customs in Bible times from modern times.
- Geographical gaps e.g. some rivers spoken of in the bible have long dried up and some places and countries spoken of in the Bible no longer are found on modern maps (that is why there are maps in your Bible for Old Testament times and New Testament times).
- Historical gaps – the Bible speaks of kings and empires that existed centuries ago.

Below are some principles for interpreting the Bible written by an Adventist minister/theologian. Using these principles will help us understand difficult passages and keep us from falling into error when interpreting Scripture.

### **Fundamental Rules for Interpreting Scripture**

1. Since Jesus spoke and the Bible writers wrote primarily for the people of their day, always consider the historical, geographical, and cultural setting of the passage you are studying.
2. Always consider the context of the unit, chapter, and book when interpreting a text. The meaning of each verse must agree with the theme of the unit, chapter, and book, as well as the overall teaching of the Bible.
3. When interpreting a passage or verse, make sure to study each sentence grammatically to get the correct meaning. Pay special attention to the verbs as they deal with actions.
4. Make sure to get the meaning of each text as intended by the Bible writer or inspired speaker before making application. This is called bridge-building and is important in giving Bible studies.
5. Difficult texts must be interpreted in the light of the clear teachings of the whole Bible. Therefore, study all that Scripture teaches on a given subject before coming to a conclusion on any single verse.
6. The New Testament must be interpreted in the light of the Old Testament and vice versa. The Old Testament is promise and the New Testament is fulfilment. Both complement each other.
7. For accuracy, use the best translations and, if at all possible, compare with the original text.

*E.H. "Jack" Sequeira*

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