

# THE BIBLE—THE MOST UNIQUE BOOK IN THE WORLD

## Part Three

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This is part three in our look at seven points necessary for understanding what the Bible is. In previous articles we have seen: 1) Biblical inspiration; 2) the Bible is authoritative and powerful; 3) Scriptural declarations concerning the Bible's own authority. And now we come to point 4:

### 4. The Uniqueness of the Bible

- The Bible is the only book in the world that offers objective evidence to be the Word of God. Only the Bible gives real proof of its divine inspiration.
- The Bible is the only religious Scripture in the world that logically can be considered inerrant in the autographs.
- The Bible is the only ancient book with documented scientific and medical prevision. No other ancient book is ever carefully analyzed along scientific lines, but many books have been written on the theme of the Bible and modern science.
- The Bible is the only religious Scripture that offers eternal salvation as a free gift entirely by God's grace and mercy.
- The Bible is the only major ancient religious Scripture whose complete textual preservation is established as virtually autographic.
- The Bible contains the greatest moral standards of any book.
- Only the Bible begins with the creation of the universe by divine fiat and contains a continuous, if often brief and interspersed, historical record of mankind from the first man, Adam, to the end of history.
- Only the Bible contains detailed prophecies about the coming Savior of the world and whose prophecies have proven true in history.
- Only the Bible has the most realistic view of human nature, the power to convict people of their sin and the ability to change human nature.
- Only the Bible has unique theological content including theology proper (the Trinity; God's attributes); soteriology (depravity, imputation, grace, propitiation/atonement, reconciliation, regeneration, union with Christ, justification, adoption, sanctification, eternal security, election and so on); Christology (the incarnation; hypostatic union); pneumatology (the Person and work of the Holy Spirit); eschatology (detailed predictions of the end of history); ecclesiology (the nature of the church as Christ's bride and its organic union with Him); and more. (A good systematic theology, such as Wayne Grudem's *Bible Doctrine*, published by Moody Press, will be useful in understanding what the Bible teaches on these and other subjects.)
- Only the Bible offers a realistic and permanent solution to the problem of human sin and evil.
- Only the Bible has its accuracy confirmed in history by archeology and other sciences.
- The internal and historical characteristics of the Bible are unique in its unity and internal consistency despite production over a 1,500-year period by 40-plus authors in three

languages on three continents discussing scores of controversial subjects yet having agreement on all issues.

- The Bible is the most translated, purchased, memorized and persecuted book in history.
- Only the Bible is fully one-quarter prophetic, containing a total of some 400 complete pages of predictions.
- Only the Bible has withstood 2,000 years of intense scrutiny by critics, not only surviving the attacks but prospering and having its credibility strengthened by such criticism. (Voltaire, and not a few cult leaders, predicted that the Bible would be extinct within 100 years; within 50 years Voltaire was extinct and his house was a warehouse of the Geneva Bible Society.)
- The Bible has molded the history of Western civilization more than any other book. The Bible has had more influence in the world than any other book.
- Only the Bible has a Person-specific (Christ centered) nature for each of its 66 books, detailing the Person's life in prophecy, type, anti-type and so on 400-1,500 years before the Person was born.
- Only the Bible proclaims a resurrection of its central figure that is proven in history.
- Only the Bible provides historic proof that the one true God loves mankind.

## **5. Principles for Interpreting the Bible**

The Scripture declares that it is our responsibility to interpret the Bible accurately. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). The reason that members of cults misinterpret the Bible is because they have never studied or properly applied the rules for correctly interpreting a historical document like the Bible. Our *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* documents numerous examples of how cults misinterpret the Bible by failing to adhere to accepted rules of textual interpretation. While it is beyond the scope of this discussion to offer an adequate treatment of hermeneutical principles, these may be secured from any good treatment of biblical hermeneutics, such as McQuilkin's *Interpreting and Applying the Bible*.

In order to approach the Word of God correctly, we must have familiarity with the basic rules of interpretation, such as that the Bible is to be interpreted normally or literally. There is no justification in the text, or anywhere else, for generally interpreting it mystically, or only symbolically or through the alleged insights of so-called "higher consciousness" or alleged new divine revelations that contradict the Bible's earlier revelation. To interpret the Bible normally means attention must be paid to what the authors' intended, what the words they wrote meant to them in their linguistic and historical context. The point is to discover the writer's intent, which is the only true meaning. This meaning is fixed by the author and not subject to alteration by anyone else, cultist or Christian. It should also be noted that while a good English translation is usually reliable, it may not convey all the nuances or force of the original Greek or Hebrew.

Biblical verses must be interpreted with due reference to the original languages of Scripture—Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic—and one must study word meanings and grammar. Comparing corollary or parallel passages relevant to the particular verse or topic is also important. Bible verses must be interpreted both in their immediate and larger context. This may require some understanding of the author, and the general historical context, such as whether the book is pre-exilic or post-exilic. Just as no one interprets a single sentence in a magazine article by

itself, but in the context of the entire article, this must be true with the Bible.

Understanding the literary genre of a passage is also important. Thus, one would not interpret the parables of Jesus in the same manner as the historical narrative in, say, the Book of Acts. In addition, because the Bible is a compilation of progressive revelation, the Old Testament text when applicable must be interpreted in light of the greater and final revelation of the New Testament. Also one must interpret unclear passages in light of clear ones, and, because the Bible is inerrant revelation, one must assume that problem passages have a resolution rather than being an error. Time and again history and archaeological discovery have proven the correctness of this approach.

If we respect the Bible as the Word of God, apply proper interpretive principles, and depend upon the Holy Spirit to help us interpret and apply it properly, our reverent study will bring great rewards.

## **6. Jesus' View of Scripture**

All cults must somehow undermine the authority of Scripture. They do this by alleging textual corruption, or a false interpretation by the church or new revelation that corrects or completes the Bible. But what all cults fail to do at this point is to honor the words of Jesus, whom they claim to revere. Jesus said plainly, without any qualification whatsoever, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). He said that heaven and earth would pass away but that His words would never pass away (Matthew 24:35). In John 14:26 He promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things and bring to remembrance the things Jesus had taught them. He taught that the Holy Spirit, whom He would send, would guide the disciples into all the truth (John 16:13), thus pre-authenticating the inspiration and inerrancy of the New Testament. Clearly, Jesus did not believe that the Holy Spirit, whom He called the Spirit of truth (John 14:17), would corrupt His own words or inspire error. As the incarnate son of God, Jesus was an infallible authority. He would hardly teach the infallibility of the Old Testament and not know that the same condition would apply to the New Testament. As the only man in history to ever resurrect Himself from the dead (John 2:19), His view of Scripture holds precedent over everyone else's.

## **7. The Bible Is Proven Reliable Historically**

(We will deal with this at length beginning with the next article.)

### **Recommended Reading**

John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*;

Rene Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*;

Norman Geisler, *Christ the Theme of the Bible*;

Henry Morris, *Modern Science and the Bible*;

Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*;

Norman Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy*;

J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*