

The Bible

Its Meaning and Uniqueness

The Bible is holy! It is inspired by God and it is the oldest book in existence. The five books of Moses were written in approximately 1675 B.C. The religious manuscripts of the Eastern Religions were not written until centuries later. For example, the Zend-Avesta of Zoroaster (holy scriptures of the Parsee (Persians) in the old Iranian language) was written about 1200 B.C.; the Veda of the Indians about 1100 B.C.; the books of Confucius (Chinese philosopher) about 1100 B.C.; the writings of Buddha (Indian founder of Buddhism) approximately 600 B.C.; and the Koran of Mohammed (Islam) about 600 A.D.

Prof. Montiero Williams, a well-known professor of Sanskrit, the native language of India and the language of the Vedas, studied Eastern books for 42 years and compared them with the Bible. He said: "Stack them (the Eastern books) on the left-hand side of your desk, put your own Holy Bible on the right-hand side, and create a wide space in between, because there is a gulf between the so-called holy scriptures of the East and the Holy scriptures of the Bible, a gulf which cannot be bridged. Their light seems like a flicker compared to the light of the Bible!"

The Koran even contains a few quotations put together from the Old and New Testaments. The so-called holy books of the heathen reveal many erroneous and superstitious ideas which are only the product of human understanding. There is little understanding of the true living God. In comparison however, the laws in the books of Moses are not a human invention - they are God's law. The Bible is the foundation of Godly revelations to mankind. No man could have compiled such a work. Exclusively showing this are Ivan Panin's discoveries of a system of numerical values flowing throughout the whole Bible, which form its basis like a mosaic. The tyranny and religious guile of priests in these other so-called holy scriptures are not found in the Bible. The Bible is free of mysteries, witchcraft, lascivious habits and magic, which turn the heathen scriptures into abominations before God.

The Bible's principles point towards God's Holiness and mankind's sinfulness. They also demonstrate the necessity of atonement, redemption and the holy state to which the Creator promised to lift up fallen mankind. God's punishments are just and His rewards show forth His love.

The word "bible" originates from the Greek word "biblia" - books. The modification from plural to singular took place in the 13th century. Since then the books have been called "book", i.e. "Bible". As an introduction thereto you can read Isaiah 34 verse 16: *"Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them."* The importance of the Bible is described in 2.Timothy 3, verses 16-17: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

Its Contrast to the Heathen Scriptures can also be seen in its Construction

The Bible is unique in its continuity. It was written over a period of roughly 1,700 years by over 40 writers from different backgrounds. Moses was a leader of a nation, brought up as a prince and future Pharaoh, Amos was a shepherd, Peter a fisherman, Joshua a general, Nehemiah a governor, Ezra a high priest, Daniel a prime minister, Luke a doctor, Matthew a tax collector and Paul a rabbi.

The Bible was written at different locations - in the wilderness of the desert, in palaces and in jail. It was written on three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. It was written in three languages. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, except for Ezra 4 verse 8 to Ezra 6 verse 18, Ezra 7 verses 12-26, and Daniel 2 verses 4-7 and 28 which were written in Aramean, the so-called 'Chaldean' of those days. The language of the New Testament is Greek, which was the commercial and colloquial language of the whole Roman Empire at the time of Christ.

The lost paradise of creation has become a regained paradise of revelations. The Bible is not a book of 'godly expression' in a 'supernatural language' - it is the revelation of God which came in the form of a simple human language, understandable to everyone throughout all the ages. Even though the Bible was written over such a long period of time, it shows complete uniformity, considering the writers did not know of each other and did not intend to write a book. It is a book written by men whom God used to record His revelations.

The Bible does not conform to the tastes or habits of a certain people, nor is it calculated for a certain period of time, but it is suitable for all people and for all periods of time. It is God's will - God's testament for all mankind.

Seen as a literary work, the Bible is the most remarkable book ever written. It is a library of 66 books, some of considerable volume, others no longer than a leaflet. They contain various forms of literature, history, biography, poetry, proverbs, sayings, hymns, letters, laws, instructions, solemn adorations, parables, riddles, prophecies and all other forms of human expression. Anyone can read it to be wise; believe it to receive salvation; practise it to be holy; or to fill their mind to lead their heart. You can read it prayerfully, reverently, in continual study, and still it will always be new and full of life and power to you.

The Difference from the Heathen Scriptures is further seen in its Circulation

The Bible has been read by more people and translated into more languages than any other book. It is the first book that was printed by Gutenberg in Mainz. It is truly the Word of God! It is also the first book to have been translated into another language - from Hebrew into Greek in 250 B.C. It was translated by 70 Hebrew scholars in Alexandria, and as Greek was the world's main language then, it was given the name "Septuaginta", i.e. "seventy". In 366 to 384 A.D. the Bible was translated into Latin and was called "Vulgata", which means "the popular".

The Bible is Unique in its Survival

Time and again the Bible was copied, centuries before the invention of the art of printing; time and again it was copied, because the material became old. There are more manuscripts and hand-writings of the Bible in existence than of any other book in the world. The Bible is better preserved than Shakespeare's literature, and he only lived about 300 years ago. His writings contain more doubtful texts than, for example, the New Testament. The Bible has survived all persecution and criticism.

The Bible is also unique in its teaching. Jesus Christ conquered millions more people than Alexander the Great, Caesar and Mohammed put together, without weapons and without science. He

shed more light on human and divine things than all the philosophers put together. He spoke such words of life as had never been spoken before and have never been spoken since.

The Reliability of the Bible

We have more than 5,300 known manuscripts of the New Testament, more than 10,000 of the Latin Vulgate and more than 24,000 copies of manuscripts of the New Testament. The copies were so scrupulous and exact, that they were often considered to be originals. The Jews had great respect for the Word of God and took care not to add, correct or omit anything. This was also strictly prohibited - see Revelation 22 verses 18-19, Deuteronomy 4 verse 2 and other passages. This is a phenomenon, an occurrence, which is incomparable in the history of literature. Archaeological discoveries also confirm the genuineness of the Bible, e.g. that the walls of Jericho did not fall to the inside (as they would have in a military attack), but to the outside (Joshua 6 verse 20). The Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke, are unparalleled in their historical accuracy - Luke was a perfect historian.

Modern historians start their so-called "critical, open and honest" examinations of the scriptures with suppositions like: 'there is no God', 'there are no miracles (they are impossible)', 'we live in a closed system and there is nothing supernatural'. If they examine the life of Christ, the miracles and the resurrection, they conclude that there are no miracles and no resurrection as they believe that there is no God. These are not historical facts, but philosophical prejudices at best. History can only be based on reports. For example, no living historian has ever seen Abraham Lincoln or Frederic the Great. However, everybody believes they existed because of reports that Lincoln lived and was the President of the United States, and that Frederic the Great lived and was the founder of the State of Prussia. And what happens with the perfect reports about Jesus and His miracles? - They are being denied by many.

The Importance of the Bible

As the Bible is the Word of God, it is a book of crucial importance for man. Man's destiny depends on his attitude towards it. It challenges him to make a decision and shows him that as he naturally is, he cannot stand before the Holy God. It shows him clearly that he is a sinner and that sin separates him from God, but it also tells him that God still loves mankind and has created a way for a relationship to be established. This was accomplished by the work of our redeemer Jesus Christ, and by His death of reconciliation on the cross at Calvary. He could say of Himself:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

JOHN 14:6

It depends solely on the decision of each individual, either to accept, in faith, that the works of our redeemer Jesus Christ occurred, and thereafter to walk on the path leading to heaven, or to reject them and to be lost in everlasting darkness, separated from God. There can be no indifference towards God's offer. He who thinks he can dismiss it with an indifferent attitude needs to know that God will one day require him to give an account.

There is power in the Word of God. In Hebrews 4 verse 12 it is written: ***"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*** The Word of God also gives power - It has given thousands and thousands of people the power to leave home, house and country rather than to be without the Bible. Millions of people have given their lives for their faith.

Anybody can experience for themselves that the Bible is the Word of God. If anyone reads the Bible with a sincere desire (you should start with the Gospels in the New Testament), and asks God beforehand to open their understanding of the Holy Scriptures, then they will soon experience a change in their life to the positive. Once they realise the greatness of the sacrifice of Jesus

Christ, trust in Him and put their life into His almighty hands (i.e. when they no longer run away from God but go towards Him), they will receive the assurance of salvation. When they recognise the mistakes in their life and acknowledge them, they will experience a happiness and peace in their heart which can no longer be taken away by anyone. In other words, they will experience for themselves that the Bible is the Word of God and that it creates new life. They will also be able to see that the promises which are given to those who ask, have special significance for their everyday life. For example, the promise of Jesus in Matthew 7 verse 7, "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*", does not only refer to spiritual things, but also to all situations in everyday life, as a help for various difficulties whatever they may be.

The peculiar thing about reading the Bible is that it keeps man from sinning (see Psalm 119 verse 11 and John 15 verse 3). Taking the time to read the Word of God is the way to keep sin at a distance. Then the Lord will be able to keep our thoughts occupied with the Word and so prevent a multitude of evil thoughts from arising. This leads to the cleansing of the spirit, soul and body. Nobody wants to sin, but the Bible shows the way to keep sin at a distance. This power which is in the Word of God has also caused people to be healed just by reading it. Since there is so much power in the Word of God, it has to be read with prayer, because the enemy of the soul, who wants to keep man away from God by all means possible, contends very strongly for your thoughts.

Most of the prophetic messages of the Bible have already been fulfilled and the remainder which are still to occur, are nearing fulfilment. This is why the person who knows the contents of the Bible will also know about things to come, and will be assured that God holds everything in His hands. Therefore, they can look into the future with confidence and not with fear.

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