

Living the Essentials of the Faith: Everywhere, Everyone, At All Times
RAISE – Revelation, Anthropology, Incarnation, Sanctification, Eternity
Revelation Part 2 – Why do we believe that the Bible is unique?

Key Concept: The Bible itself is part of God’s special revelation because it is “inspired” by God; its text and composition are simultaneously 100% human and 100% divine.

Summary: In the Christian tradition, not only do we believe that Scripture records the special revelation of God, we also believe that the record (i.e. the Bible) is itself special revelation. In other words, we believe the text of the Bible is more than a history of God’s revelations; it is “living and active” (Hebrews 4:12). Therefore, we treat the words of the Bible in a very different fashion than we would treat, say, the words of C. S. Lewis, Martin Luther, or John Calvin.

Much of this difference resides in our understanding of how we received the Scriptures. We believe that God was intimately involved in the transmission of the bible to His people. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us that all Scripture is “inspired by God” or “God-breathed.” We believe that our Bible is like Jesus Christ in that is Incarnational. We believe that it is both 100% human, and 100% God. We acknowledge that human writers used their own creativity, discernment and intellect to write the Bible. On the other hand, we believe that Scripture is unique in that God mystically and mysteriously worked with each human author, guiding them in what they wrote. This is not to say that God dictated to or controlled them, but that God’s purposes and theirs, His will and theirs merged such that the finished product fully reflects both human and divine intention.

This concept of inspiration has an extremely important corollary with the Incarnation. Just as we would reject the idea that Jesus is sometimes human, and sometimes God, so too we reject the idea that the words of Scripture are sometimes from mortals, and sometimes divine. We affirm that they are always both; always of human origin, and always of divine inspiration. We can never discount a section of Scripture as merely reflective of the author or the context but irrelevant to us as modern readers, for we believe that God, who inspired those words, also intended for them to speak to us and to our children. Similarly, we can never select a passage of Scripture and pretend that its original context has no bearing on our understanding, because the human authors who wrote those words did so for a particular time and place. We must hold in tension both the human and divine authorship of Scripture each time we open its pages.

In other words, we believe that all Scripture must be primarily relevant to its original audience and that understanding the original audience and author will help us understand the message of God in the Bible. We also believe that Scripture is “living and active” and therefore remains relevant for us in our modern context, as it has been and will be for Christians of every time and place. Scripture is not limited to the perspectives or intentions of its human authors. That means that a book like Revelation was primarily relevant to its first audience; it also means that a book like Leviticus is still relevant for us today.