

# What Do We Believe ... About the Bible?

We are beginning our study of the key doctrines of Bible Center in preparation for deciding on whether to revise our Articles of Faith, or not. *Why are we considering a revision?*

- We want our children and youth to clearly understand what it is we believe the Bible teaches so they will have a good foundation for the challenges ahead. *Does it communicate to our children and youth clearly what we mean?*
- We want to make sure their parents and grandparents understand the doctrines so we can teach them correctly to our children and others. *Have we correctly understood the teaching?*
- There are some doctrines which have been omitted from our Articles of Faith that we think need to be addressed, for instance, *the Second Coming of Christ*.
- Words change, so we need to update them to make sure we are clearly communicating the key principles upon which our church is built to those who check out our website. *Will this communicate to visitors what we actually believe or will they misunderstand?*

*If you were looking for a church and wanted to avoid a cult, what would you want to know about their teachings?*

*How important would it be to you that the Bible was their final authority for faith and practice?*

The first statement in our *Articles of Faith* is *Section 1 - The Holy Scriptures*. We put it first because the Bible is our authority for what we believe and how we conduct our lives.

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| We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally inspired Word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible and God-breathed. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 16:12-13). |
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In this next part, consider these questions as you read this over:

1. *Are there any words or even whole phrases that you do not understand? Underline or circle the ones you are not sure about.*
2. *Do you see how the verses cited support the statements made? If not, what doesn't seem to be taught in these verses?*
3. *Is there anything not in this statement that would be important to address that isn't?*
4. *Would you take anything out as being unimportant to a church?*

The committee revising our Articles of Faith noted three things they believe ought to be changed about this statement:

- A. We need to clarify what we mean by the Holy Scriptures since churches disagree about which books are in the Bible. For instance, the Catholic version of the Bible has seven more books than ours, plus several additions to Daniel in the Old Testament. We agree on the 27 books in the New Testament.

| Protestant<br>(39 Books) | Roman Catholic<br>New American Bible: Revised Ed.<br>(46 Books)  | Original<br>Language                  |
|--------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Genesis - Deuteronomy    | (Same)   | Hebrew                                |
| Joshua - 2 Chronicles    | (Same)   | Hebrew                                |
| Ezra - Nehemiah          | (Same)   | Hebrew &<br>Aramaic                   |
|                          | <i>Tobit</i>   | Aramaic                               |
|                          | <i>Judith</i>  | Hebrew                                |
| Esther                   | (Same)   | Hebrew                                |
|                          | 1 Maccabees<br>2 Maccabees   | Hebrew, only exists in Greek<br>Greek |
| Job – Song of Solomon    | (Same)   | Hebrew                                |
|                          | Wisdom of Solomon<br>Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira)   | Greek                                 |
| Isaiah - Lamentations    | (Same)   | Hebrew                                |
|                          | Baruch   | Greek                                 |
| Ezekiel                  | (Same)   | Hebrew                                |
| Daniel 1-12<br>(Hebrew)  | <i>Insertion after 3:23</i><br>Prayer of Azariah (3:24-90)<br>Susanna (13:1-64)<br>Bel, & the Dragon (14:1-42) | Greek                                 |
| Hosea - Malachi          | (Same)   | Hebrew                                |

- B. The words “*inerrant*” and “*infallible*” are not commonly used nor understood in their theological meaning in every day conversation.
- C. We do not say anything here about how the Bible is to be interpreted. Many people interpret the Bible according to what they think it means to them. We will discuss this next week.

This led the committee to come up with the following revision with the suggestions for things needing changing noted in **bold**

We believe the Holy Scriptures, **consisting of the 66 books** of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally inspired **(God-breathed)** Word of God, **without error** in the original writings, **therefore** the final, **trustworthy** (infallible) authority for faith and life. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 16:12-13).

5. *Why do we call the Bible “Holy Scripture” (2 Peter 1:20-21)?*
6. *What is meant by “inspiration” (2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 16:12-13)?*
7. *Why do we think the Bible is inerrant, that is, without error?*
8. *What does the word “infallible” mean in relation to the Bible?*

## EXPLANATION OF TERMS

**Holy Scripture** refers to the Bible, a collection of writings, consisting of the Old and New Testaments.

**Testament** is an archaic English term meaning *covenant*. The Law of Moses was a covenant of works placed upon Israel to demonstrate that man cannot keep God's Law and therefore needs a Savior. Salvation was never by works, nor was it possible by works. Paul referred to the Law as the *Old Covenant* (*2 Corinthians 3:14*) following Jeremiah's introduction of the *New Covenant* (*Jeremiah 31:31-32*).

**Old Testament** (also called the Hebrew *Scriptures*, *Old Covenant*) is a collection of writings recognized by the Jews and by the church to be Scripture. In the Hebrew Bible the order of these books is the *Law* (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), the *Prophets* (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve minor prophets), the *Writings* (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles).

**Canon** These are the only books that we believe come up to the standard to be called Scripture. This standard is sometimes called the canon. Other ancient writings, many included in the Greek translation known as the Septuagint, may be valuable reading, but are not inspired. The three major branches of the Christian faith: Roman Catholicism, Orthodox, and Protestants, accept the 66 books as Scriptures while differing on the other works.

**New Testament** refers to the *Gospels* (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), *Acts*, *the writings of Paul* (Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon), *the General Epistles* (Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, Jude) and *The Revelation*.

Men in the earliest days of the church recognized that God had moved upon these holy men to write Scripture. The churches attested to their authenticity and value by preserving and using them. Later on several church councils discussed the issue and agreed to only allow these twenty-seven works to be included in a collection we call the New Testament.

**Verbally Inspired Word of God** says that God moved upon the authors to write every word (verbally) in the Bible, not merely the ideas or message they conveyed, even down to the letters (Matthew 5:18). Inspired means the same thing as God-breathed (see below). Thus whatever the Bible says is what God would say were He to speak directly from heaven to us.

**God-breathed** is a literal translation of 2 Timothy 3:16 (inspired by God) and emphasizes that the word inspired does not mean the same thing as when we say that a sunset inspired a painting or a poem. It really means that the Bible is the Word of God just as much as if He had actually spoken it from heaven to a scribe.

**Final Authority for Faith and Life** means that when questions arise as to what we believe and how to live, we consult the Bible to see what it teaches and that settles the issue for us. Others might go back to what the founders of their church said, or what the early fathers said, or what their current leaders say, or to what is popular opinion, but we go back to the Bible to seek to answer the question, "What did God say?"

**Without Error in the Original Writings** means that since it is the Word of the God who cannot lie, it cannot be in error. Some have tried to say that the Bible can be inspired, but also be in error. For this reason, the word inerrant was added to this concept of inspiration. This inerrancy holds true only in the writings as originally written by these holy men. Through the years, people added words, omitted some, and changed spellings as they copied the Scriptures. We can look at the thousands of copies, at the ancient translations, and at the various lectionaries used by the churches to see these variations (called variants). The variants are not considered inspired, only the originals as written by the human author.

**Trustworthy (Infallible)** indicates that the Bible is never wrong in what it affirms to be true, therefore it can be relied upon. It may quote the errors of men accurately, but when it teaches something we can rely upon it.