

**Thanksgiving:** The perfect gift of God has come from heaven to earth! This prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus! "6 **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.**" (Isa 9:6-7 ESV)

Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations C. Campbell (Fredericton) and J. Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, P. Ward (Saint John) and others.

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#### **ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2020**

Times of worship services: Moncton – 10:30 AM every Sunday

- Time of worship services in **Saint John** – Sunday, January 12 and 26 at 2:30 PM.
- **Communion**- On the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday – **Moncton** and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday - **Saint John**
- Address:
  - Moncton— 70 King St. —Sage building, second floor;
  - Saint John—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

**The next Discipleship groups:** The next bible study Thursday, January 9 at 7:30 PM home of Mr. and Mrs. Vautour. We will continue in the book of Philippians.

**Local Website:** Should you have forgotten the password to enter "**For members only**" on the [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca) website, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Vautour.

[www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton](https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton) - Please note the following: As the bulletin is not done weekly anymore but done on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of every month, articles in the continuing series posted in the bulletin are uploaded to this website every week. It is hoped this will be a help in your personal Bible Studies.

Your feedback is always appreciated as well as any positive suggestions.

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**Please pray for God's protection for people in Australia,** (excerpts from <https://www.aljazeera.com/>) "**Catastrophic' conditions as bushfires intensify in Australia** At least 10 people killed and three million hectares of land torched across country in recent months. ...A heatwave has intensified bushfires ravaging parts of [Australia](#), and blazes surrounding Sydney worsened under "catastrophic" conditions.

*Australia's east coast has been hit by a record-breaking heatwave, which has moved in from the west of the country, exacerbating hundreds of fires in its path....On Saturday, Sydney was shrouded in toxic smoke as blazes flared to its north, south and west, some just 130 kilometres (80 miles) from Australia's largest city....Australia endures bushfires every year but the early and intense start to this season, along with the record temperatures, has raised concerns about global warming....Temperatures were expected to peak at 47 degrees Celsius (116 degrees Fahrenheit) in parts of the country's most populous state,*

*NSW, with west Sydney expected to reach 37C (98F) before a cool change is expected later in the day...At least three million hectares (7.4 million acres) of land have been torched across the country in recent months, with at least 10 people killed and more than 800 homes destroyed."*

**Prayers for GCI across the world:** that we will walk in God's will for us and that we will see, understand and participate in his work as He guides the leadership, Mr. Williams, GCI Director, Mr. Bill Hall, Canadian Director and all the others in leadership wherever they may be.

### **THE BIBLE: THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD**

<https://www.gci.org/articles/the-written-word-of-god/>

How do we know who Jesus is, or what he taught? How do we know when a teaching is false? Where is the authority for sound doctrine and right living? The Bible is the inspired and infallible record of what God wants us to know and do.

#### **A witness to Jesus**

Perhaps you've heard about the "Jesus Seminar," a group of scholars in the 1990s who claimed that Jesus didn't say most of the things the Bible says he did.[1] Or perhaps you've heard of other scholars who say that the Bible is a collection of contradictions and myths.

Many well-educated people dismiss the Bible. Many other equally educated people believe it is a trustworthy record of what God has done and said. If we cannot trust what the Bible says about Jesus, for example, then we will know almost nothing about him.

Do we have good reason to trust the biblical reports about Jesus? Yes – they were written within a few decades of Jesus' death, when eyewitnesses were still alive. Jewish disciples often memorized the words of their teachers, so it is possible that Jesus' disciples preserved his teachings accurately. We have no evidence that they invented sayings to deal with early church concerns, such as circumcision. This suggests that they are reliable reports of what Jesus taught.

We can also be confident that the manuscripts were well preserved. We have some copies from the fourth century, and smaller sections from the second century. This is better than all other ancient books. (The oldest copy of Virgil's *Aeneid* was copied 350 years after Virgil died; of Plato, 1,300 years.) The manuscripts show that the Bible was copied carefully, and we have a reliable text.

#### **Jesus' witness to Scripture**

Jesus was willing to argue with the Pharisees on many issues, but he did not seem to argue with their view of the Scriptures. Although Jesus disagreed on interpretations and traditions, he apparently agreed with other Jewish leaders that the Scriptures were authoritative for faith and practice. Jesus expected every word in Scripture to be fulfilled ([Matthew 5:17-18](#); [Mark 14:49](#)). He quoted Scripture to prove his points ([Matthew 9:13](#); [22:31](#); [26:24](#); [26:31](#); [John 10:34](#)); he rebuked people for not reading Scripture carefully enough ([Matthew 22:29](#); [Luke 24:25](#); [John 5:39](#)). He referred to Old Testament people and events without any hint that they were not real.

Scripture had the authority of God behind it. When Jesus answered Satan's temptations, he said, "It is written" ([Matthew 4:4-10](#)). The fact that something was written in Scripture meant, for Jesus, that it was an indisputable authority. The words of David were inspired by the Holy Spirit ([Mark 12:36](#)); a prophecy was given "through" Daniel ([Matthew 24:15](#)) because its real origin was God.

Jesus said that the Creator said: "A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife" ([Matthew 19:4-5](#), quoting in [Genesis 2:24](#)). However, Genesis does not describe this verse as the words of God. Jesus could say that God said it because it was in Scripture. He believed that God is the ultimate author of all of Scripture.

The evidence throughout the Gospels is that Jesus viewed Scripture as reliable and trustworthy. As he reminded the Jewish leaders, "Scripture cannot be broken" ([John 10:35](#)). Jesus expected it to be valid; he even upheld the validity of old covenant commands while the old covenant was still in force ([Matthew 8:4](#); [23:23](#)).

### Witness of the apostles

The apostles, like their teacher, considered Scripture authoritative. They quoted it repeatedly, often as proof of an argument. The sayings of Scripture are treated as words of God. Scripture is even personalized as the God who spoke to Abraham and Pharaoh ([Romans 9:17](#); [Galatians 3:8](#)). What David, Isaiah or Jeremiah wrote was actually from God, and therefore certain ([Acts 1:16](#); [4:25](#); [13:35](#); [28:25](#); [Hebrews 1:6-10](#); [10:15](#)). The law of Moses is assumed to reflect the mind of God ([1 Corinthians 9:9](#)). The real author of Scripture is God ([1 Corinthians 6:16](#); [Romans 9:25](#)).

Paul called the Scriptures “the very words of God” ([Romans 3:2](#)). Peter says that the prophets “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” ([2 Peter 1:20](#)). The prophets didn’t make it up – God inspired them, and he is the real origin of their words. They often wrote, “the word of the Lord came...” or “Thus says the Lord...”

Paul also told Timothy that “**all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness**” ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)). It is as if God spoke his message through the biblical writers.

However, we must not read into this our modern ideas of what “**God-breathed**” has to mean. We must remember that Paul said this about the Greek Septuagint *translation* (the Scriptures that Timothy had known since childhood – **verse 15**), and this translation is in some places considerably different than the Hebrew original. Paul used this translation as the inspired word of God without meaning that it was a perfect text. Despite its translation discrepancies, it is God-breathed and able to make people “**wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus**” and **it is still able to equip believers “for every good work” (verse 17)**.

### Imperfect communication

The original word of God is perfect, and God is able to cause people to state it accurately, to preserve it accurately and (to complete the communication) cause us to understand it correctly. But God has not done all this. Our copies have grammatical errors, copyist errors, and (far more significantly) humans always make errors in receiving the message. There is “noise” that prevents us from hearing perfectly the message that God inspired to be written in Scripture. Nevertheless, God uses Scripture to speak to us today.

Despite the “noise” that puts human mistakes between God and us, the purpose of Scripture is accomplished: to tell us about salvation and about right behavior. God accomplishes his purpose in Scripture: he communicates his word to us with enough clarity that we can be saved and we can learn what he wants us to do.

Scripture, even in a translation, is accurate for its purpose. But we would be wrong to expect more from it than God intended. He is not teaching us astronomy or science. The numbers in Scripture are not always mathematically precise by today’s standards. We must look at Scripture for its purpose, not for minor details.

For example, in [Acts 21:11](#), Agabus was inspired to say that the Jews would bind Paul and hand him over to the Gentiles. Some people might assume that Agabus was specifying who would tie Paul up, and what they would do with him. But as it turns out, Paul was actually rescued by the Gentiles and bound by the Gentiles ([21:30-33](#)).

Is this a contradiction? Technically, yes. The prediction was true in principle, but not in the details. When Luke wrote this, he could have easily doctored the prediction to fit the result, but he was willing to let the differences be seen. He did not think that people should expect precision in such details. This should warn us about expecting precision in all the details of Scripture.

We need to focus on the main point of the message. Similarly, Paul made a mistake when he wrote [1 Corinthians 1:14](#)— a mistake he corrected in verse 16. The inspired Scriptures contain both the mistake and the correction.

We accept the testimony of church history, that Christians through the centuries have found the Bible useful for faith and practice. This book tells us who God is, what he did for us, and how we should respond. Tradition also tells us which books are in the biblical canon. We trust that God guided the process so that the end result accomplishes his purpose. No one can prove that all of the Bible is true. They may show that a particular prophecy came true, but they cannot show that the entire Bible has the

same validity. This is based more on faith. We see the historical evidence that Jesus and the apostles accepted the Old Testament as the word of God. The biblical Jesus is the only one we have; other ideas are based on guesswork, not new evidence. We accept the teaching of Jesus that the Holy Spirit would guide the disciples into more truth. We accept the claim of Paul that he wrote with divine authority. We accept that the Bible reveals to us who God is and how we may have fellowship with him.

Our experience also testifies to the accuracy of Scripture. This is the book that has the honesty to tell us about our own sinfulness, and the grace to offer us a cleansed conscience. It gives us moral strength not through rules and commands, but in an unexpected way – through grace and the ignominious death of our Creator.

The Bible testifies to the love, joy and peace we may have through faith – feelings that are, just as the Bible describes, beyond our ability to put into words ([Ephesians 3:19](#); [1 Peter 1:8](#); [Philippians 4:7](#)). This book gives us meaning and purpose in life by telling us of divine creation and redemption. These aspects of biblical authority cannot be proven to skeptics, but they help verify the Scriptures that tell us these things that we experience.

The Bible does not sugar-coat its heroes, and this also helps us accept it as honest. It tells us about the failings of Abraham, Moses, David, the nation of Israel, and the disciples. The Bible is a word that bears witness to a more authoritative Word, the Word made flesh, and the good news of God's grace.

The Bible is not simplistic; it does not take the easy way out. The New Testament claims both continuity and discontinuity with the old covenant. It would be simpler to eliminate one or the other, but it is more challenging to have both. Likewise, Jesus is presented as both human and divine, a combination that does not fit well into Hebrew, Greek or modern thought. This complexity was not created through ignorance of the philosophical problems, but in spite of them. The Bible is a challenging book, not likely to be the result of fishermen attempting a fraud or trying to make sense of hallucinations. The evidence for Jesus' resurrection gives additional weight to the book that announces such a phenomenal event. It gives additional weight to the testimony of the disciples as to who Jesus was and to the unexpected logic of conquering death through the death of the Author of Life ([Acts 3:15](#)).

Repeatedly, the Bible challenges our thinking about God, ourselves, life, right and wrong. It commands respect by conveying truths to us we do not obtain elsewhere. Just as the proof of the pudding is in the eating, the proof of the Bible is in its application to our lives.

The testimony of Scripture, of tradition, of personal experience and reason all support the authority of the Bible. The fact that it is able to speak across cultures, to address situations that never existed when it was written, is also a testimony to its abiding authority. The proof of the Bible is conveyed to believers as the Holy Spirit uses it to change their hearts and lives.

### **Inerrancy and infallibility**

Some evangelical Christians believe that Christians should call the Bible inerrant; others prefer to call the Bible infallible. Although in normal usage these words mean practically the same thing, in Christian theology they are used for different concepts.

*Inerrant* generally means without error in theology, history or science. *Infallible* (sometimes called limited inerrancy) refers to doctrine; it does not insist on scientific and historical accuracy, since those are outside of the Bible's purpose.

We use the less-specific word, *infallible*. On that we can all agree, since people who believe in inerrancy also believe that the Bible does not fail in its purpose, which is to teach us about salvation and Christian life.

John Stott, who accepts inerrancy, nevertheless lists "five reasons why the word *inerrancy* makes me uncomfortable":

**First**, God's self-revelation in Scripture is so rich – both in content and in form – that it cannot be reduced to a string of propositions which invite the label 'truth' or 'error.' 'True or false?' would be an inappropriate question to address to a great deal of Scripture. [Commands are neither true nor false.]

**Second**, the word *inerrancy* is a double negative, and I always prefer a single positive to a double negative. It is better to affirm that the Bible is true and therefore trustworthy....

**Third**, the word inerrancy sends out the wrong signals and develops the wrong attitudes. Instead of encouraging us to search the Scriptures so that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of God, it seems to turn us into detectives hunting for incriminating clues and to make us excessively defensive in relation to apparent discrepancies.

**Fourth**, it is unwise and unfair to use *inerrancy* as a shibboleth by which to identify who is an evangelical and who is not. The hallmark of authentic evangelicalism...is not whether we subscribe to an impeccable formula about the Bible but whether we live in practical submission to what the Bible teaches....

**Fifth**, it is impossible to prove that the Bible contains no errors. When faced with an apparent discrepancy, the most Christian response is neither to make a premature negative judgment nor to resort to a contrived harmonization, but rather to suspend judgment, waiting patiently for further light to be given us. (*Evangelical Truth*, pages 61-62)

There is an additional problem with the word *inerrant*: It must be carefully qualified. Even one of the most conservative statements about Scripture admits that the Bible contains grammatical irregularities, exaggerations, imprecise descriptions, inexact quotations, and observations based on a limited viewpoint ("The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," Article XIII, printed in Norman L. Geisler, editor, *Inerrancy*, Zondervan, 1979, page 496).

In other words, *inerrant* does not mean "without error of any kind." Further, inerrancy applies only to the original manuscripts, not to the copies that we have today. These qualifications drain *inerrancy* of much of its meaning. The main point, as Millard Erickson says, is that "the Bible's assertions are fully true when judged in accordance with the purpose for which they were written" (*Introducing Christian Doctrine*, page 64). That is a wise qualification.

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(1] The Jesus Seminar began with a preconceived idea of what Jesus would have taught. They accepted the sayings that fit this idea, and rejected the sayings that didn't, thereby, in effect, creating a Jesus in their own image. This is not good scholarship, and even many liberal scholars disagreed with the Seminar.

#### **For further reading**

Achtemeier, Paul. *Inspiration and Authority*. Hendrickson, 1999.  
Arthur, Kay. *How to Study Your Bible*. Harvest House, 2001.  
Marshall, I. Howard. *Biblical Inspiration*. Eerdmans, 1982.  
McQuilken, Robertson. *Understanding and Applying the Bible*. Moody, 1992.  
Mickelsen, A.B. and A.M. *Understanding Scripture*. Hendrickson, 1992.  
Stott, John. *Understanding the Bible*. Zondervan, 1999.  
Thompson, Alden. *Inspiration*. Review & Herald, 1991.  
Thompson, David. *Bible Study That Works*. Evangel, 1994.

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By James  
Henderson  
Superintendent  
Edinburgh,  
Scotland

## Miracles

***"All by himself he stretches out the heavens and strides on the waves of the sea. He designed the Big Dipper and Orion, the Pleiades and Alpha Centauri. We'll never comprehend all the great things he does; his miracle-surprises can't be counted. Somehow, though he moves right in front of me, I don't see him; quietly but surely he's active, and I miss it."***

**[Job 9:8-11 \(MSG\)](#)**

I don't know about you, but I feel that the world could do with some miracles right now. In fact, quite a few of them!

On a personal level, things happen in my life that make me stop in my tracks. Sometimes they're small and, at other times, they're not so small. It's often an unexpected moment of grace, a gift that I did not see coming. It may be a word of encouragement that God sends via someone else; a thought that brings peace into my troubled mind; a crisis suddenly and inexplicably averted; an opportunity that changes my perception.

I can see how God is involved in my life, and I am thankful for it. Not that we are delivered or rescued from all of life's trials, as Paul noted in **[2 Corinthians 4:7-10 \(NIV\)](#)**, **"we have this treasure in jars of clay to show**

**that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."**

I like Albert Einstein's statement, **"There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."**

Let's live the miracle.

***Prayer.*** *Father in Heaven, thank you for the miracle of life. I am humbled that you care for me. And I pray in Jesus' name.*

*Amen*

*GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—[www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org), [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca), [www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton](https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton); For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the [GCI.org](http://GCI.org) website.*

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