

Bible-Based Beliefs: God's Revelation

1. We believe that there is only one true God (Isaiah 44:6). He has made himself known as the triune God, one God in three persons. This is evident from Jesus' command to his disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Whoever does not worship this God worships a false god, a god who does not exist. Jesus said, "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him" (John 5:23).
2. We believe that God has revealed himself in nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1). "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). So there is no excuse for atheists. Since the requirements of the law are written on people's hearts, the consciences of people also bear witness that there is a God to whom they are accountable (Romans 2:15). However, nature and conscience present only a partial revelation of God and one that is not able to show the way to heaven.
3. We believe that God has given the full revelation of himself in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (John 1:18). In Jesus, God has revealed himself as the Savior-God, who "so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).
4. We believe that God has also given a written revelation for all people in the Holy Scriptures. His revelation in the Bible has two main messages, the law and the gospel. The law declares what is right and wrong, and it threatens God's punishment for sin. The gospel presents the love of God, which he has shown especially by providing salvation from sin through Jesus Christ.
5. We believe that the entire Bible is Christ-centered. In the Old Testament God repeatedly promised a divine deliverer from sin, death, and hell. The New Testament proclaims that this promised deliverer has come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus himself says of the Old Testament, "These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39).
6. We believe that God gave the Scriptures through men whom he chose, using the language they knew and the style of writing they had. He used Moses and the prophets to write the Old Testament in Hebrew (some portions in Aramaic) and the evangelists and apostles to write the New Testament in Greek.

7. We believe that in a miraculous way that goes beyond all human investigation, God the Holy Spirit moved these men to write his Word. These men "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). What they said was spoken "not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:13). Every thought they expressed and every word they used were given them by the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul wrote to Timothy, "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). The church has called this miraculous process inspiration, which means "breathing into." Since every word of Scripture was inspired, we also call this process verbal inspiration, or word-for-word inspiration. This is not to be equated with mechanical dictation, since the Holy Spirit guided the writers as they used their individual vocabularies and writing styles.
8. We believe that Scripture is a unified whole, true and without error in everything it says, for the Savior said, "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Therefore it is the infallible authority and guide for everything we believe and do.
9. We believe that the Bible is fully sufficient, clearly teaching people all they need to know to get to heaven. It makes them "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15), and it equips them for "every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). Since God's plan of salvation has been fully revealed in the canonical books of the Bible, we need and expect no other revelations (Hebrews 1:1,2). The church is built on the teachings of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20).
10. We believe and accept the Bible on its own terms, accepting as factual history what it presents as history and recognizing as figurative speech what is evident as such. We believe that Scripture must interpret Scripture, clear passages throwing light on those less easily understood. We believe that no authority--whether it is human reason, science, or scholarship--may stand in judgment over Scripture. Sound scholarship will faithfully search out the true meaning of Scripture without presuming to pass judgment on it.
11. We believe that the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek text of the New Testament are the inspired Word of God. Translations of the Hebrew and Greek that accurately reflect the meaning of the original text convey God's truth to people and can properly be called the Word of God.
12. Although the original documents themselves have been lost, we believe that the Lord in his providential care has accurately preserved the Hebrew and Greek texts through the many hand-copied manuscripts that exist. Although there are minor differences or "variants" between the various hand-copied manuscripts, these variants do not cause any changes in doctrine.

13. We believe that the three ecumenical creeds (the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian) as well as the Lutheran Confessions as contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 express the true doctrine of Scripture. Since the doctrines they confess are drawn from Scripture alone, we are bound to them in our faith and life. Therefore all preaching and teaching in our churches and schools must be in harmony with these confessions, and we reject all the errors that they reject.
14. We reject any worship that is not directed to the triune God as revealed in the Bible. We reject the use of feminine names and pronouns for God because in Scripture God reveals himself as Father and Son. We reject the opinion that all religions lead to the same God.
15. We reject any thought that makes only part of Scripture God's Word or that allows for the possibility of factual error in Scripture, even in so-called nonreligious matters such as historical or geographical details. We likewise reject all views that say Scripture is merely a human record of God's revelation as he encounters mankind in history, and so is a record subject to human imperfections.
16. We reject any emphasis upon Jesus as the personal Word of God (John 1:1) that minimizes the role of the Scriptures as the written Word of God (Romans 3:2).
17. We reject every effort to reduce the confessions contained in the Book of Concord to historical documents that do not have binding confessional significance for the church today. We likewise reject any claim that the church is bound only to those doctrines of Scripture that are specifically addressed in these confessions.

This is what Scripture teaches about God and his revelation. This we believe, teach, and confess.