

KNOWLEDGE

The Bible: Is it Reliable?

The Bible: The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation. From <<http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/basicbeliefs.asp>>

Arguments "Against" the Reliability of the Bible

Issues related to:

Integrity

- The Bible has been altered/doesn't include all of the books (i.e. other "gospels")
- The Bible was written too long after the events actually occurred
- The Bible wasn't written in English/ has been corrupted through translation
- The Bible's authors aren't known for sure

Inerrancy

- The Bible is full of inconsistencies/ contradictions

Accuracy

- The Bible isn't true/historical (fiction)
- The Bible has been disproven by science
- The Bible's authors were biased so we can't trust them

Inspiration

- The Bible was written by man, not God

Interpretation

- The Bible can be interpreted differently by different people

Next Week: The Bible: Is it Reliable?

Inspiration, Translation, & Interpretation

1. Research the arguments and evidence in support of the Bible (**translation, interpretation**)
 - a. What kind of evidence do we have in support of the Bible's reliability?
 - b. Which are the best arguments and why?
 - c. Should we avoid any arguments and why?
2. Research the arguments in opposition to the Bible (**translation, interpretation**)
 - a. Are there additional arguments against the Bible's reliability to add to the list?
 - b. What are the most common arguments and how do we refute them?
 - c. Any other observations about the nature of arguments against the Bible that we should note?

The Bible's Reliability: Notes & Discussion

INSPIRATION & INERRANCY

"The Bible is filled with discrepancies, many of them irreconcilable contradictions...A Christianity dependent on the inerrancy of the Bible probably cannot survive the reality of the discrepancies." – Bart Ehrman

Questions Related to Inspiration

Q. How do we know that the Bible is God's Word and not man's?

Objections:

- The Bible was written by man, not God.
- The Bible is just a collection of wisdom and insights of the authors.

Response:

- **Inspiration** is the doctrine that the Bible was written by the influence of God and is without error in the **original** documents.¹

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
– 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (HCSB)

- The word for "inspired" is the Greek **ΘΕÓΠΝΕΥΣΤΟΣ** or "*theopneustos*"
 - *Theo* – **God**
 - *Pneustos* – **breath** or wind
- It is significant that the word is used in 2 Timothy 3:16 passively. In other words, God did not "breathe into" (**inspire**) all Scripture, but it was "breathed out" by God (**expire**). Thus, the Scriptures are "God-breathed."²
- The scriptures are authored by God, who moved through the writers and used their abilities and personalities while ensuring it was without error. The inspiration of Scripture is a harmony of the **active** mind of the writer and the **sovereign** direction of the Holy Spirit to produce God's inerrant and infallible Word for the human race.
- Inspiration is NOT mechanical **dictation**
- Inspiration is NOT "**automatic** writing"
- Inspiration speaks to the Bible's **authority** and **inerrancy**.

¹ "Inspiration", Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, <https://carm.org/dictionary-inspiration> (January 22, 2016)

² "Why should we believe in the inerrancy of scripture?", Answers in Genesis, <https://answersingenesis.org/is-the-bible-true/why-should-we-believe-in-the-inerrancy-of-scripture/>, (January 26, 2016)

Evidence Supporting the Bible's Divine Inspiration

- The **Bible** claims to be inspired

...knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. – 2 Peter 1:20-21

- The **Old Testament** claims to be God's Word³
 - Over 400 occurrences of "Thus says the Lord" and "God said"
 - God spoke through prophets, and the Spirit of the Lord spoke through people
- The **New Testament** claims to be God's Word

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. – John 14:25-26

If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. – 1 Corinthians 14:37

- Fulfilled Prophecy
 - **Secular** prophecies (non-religious events) that have come true
 - Daniel interprets the King's dream (ch. 2) – Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greek empire, Roman empire
 - Destruction of cities (Ninevah, Babylon, Tyre)
 - **Messianic** prophecies (regarding Jesus) that have come true

<i>Prophecy</i>	OT (Prophecy)	NT (Fulfillment)
<i>Born of a virgin</i>	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18; 25
<i>Born in Bethlehem</i>	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1
<i>Preceded by a messenger</i>	Isaiah 40:3	Matthew 3:1-2
<i>Rejected by His own people</i>	Isaiah 53:3	John 7:5;48
<i>Jesus' side pierced</i>	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34

- **Unity** of the Bible⁴
 - Written by more than 40 men of varying backgrounds
 - Written over a span of ~1,500 years
 - Written in 3 languages
 - Written on 3 continents
 - **Consistent** theme and key teachings, no contradictions!*

³ "Is the Bible inspired?", Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, <https://carm.org/bible-inspired> (January 26, 2016)

⁴ "What proof do we have for the inspiration of the Bible?", CompellingTruth.org, <http://www.compellingtruth.org/proof-inspiration-Bible.html> (January 26, 2016)

- **Scientific** details not yet discovered
 - Shape of the Earth (Isaiah 40:22)
 - Existence of valleys in the sea (2 Samuel 22:16)
 - The stars are innumerable (Genesis 15:5)
 - Existence of ocean currents (Psalm 8:8)
 - Hydrological cycle (Job 26:8)

Application

CARM recommends that you mark up your Bible so that you can find some of the prophecies made and fulfilled. Perhaps you can write down on a back flap some of the prophecy locations and their fulfillments. It is particularly effective to go to ask a person to interpret for you a portion of scripture. Then go to Psalm 22:11-18 and read aloud, slowly. When you have finished, ask him/her what those verses described. Nine times out of ten they will say it is the crucifixion. Then point out that Psalm 22 was written by David approximately 1000 B.C. and 600 years before crucifixion was invented by the Phoenicians. Then, ask them to explain out that is possible if the Bible is not inspired.⁵

Discussion

Article: "7 Reasons God is a Terrible Writer" (<http://southernskeptic.com/god-terrible-writer/>)

1. The Bible would be well-organized.
2. It would be more specific.
3. It would be easy to understand.
4. It would be perfectly consistent.
5. It would have specific, verifiable prophecies.
6. It would contain knowledge that humans couldn't have had.
7. It would have beautiful, heart-rending poetry and stories.

⁵ "Inspiration and Inerrancy", Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, <https://school.carm.org/amember/files/demo/Bible/inspiration.htm> (January 26, 2016)

Questions Related to Inerrancy

Q. How can we believe the Bible when it contradicts itself?

Objections:

- There are too many discrepancies in the Bible for it to be true.
- If the Bible has even one contradiction, then it cannot be completely true.

Response:

- **Inerrancy** is the doctrine that, when all the facts are known, the Bible – in its original manuscripts and properly interpreted – will be shown to be true and never false in all that it affirms, whether related to doctrine, ethics, or the social, physical, or life sciences.⁶
- Why do we believe the Bible is inerrant?
 - It is the **Word of God** (2 Timothy 3:16)
 - God **cannot lie** (Hebrews 6:18)
- But wait – isn't that "circular reasoning?"

Discrepancies

- A discrepancy is "a difference, especially between two things that should be the same"⁷
- Most "discrepancies" fall within one or more categories of explanation:
 - Paraphrasing, **summarizing**, and interpretation
 - Abbreviations and omissions
 - **Re-ordering** of events/sayings
 - Reporting of similar events/sayings
 - Variation in **numbers**

How to Handle Discrepancies

- Differences don't necessarily equal **errors**
- The doctrine of inerrancy requires **accuracy** but not always **precision**

Example:

(Variances in the resurrection accounts within the four Gospels)

⁶ Paul D. Feinberg, "Does the Bible Contain Errors?" in The Apologetics Study Bible (eds. Ted Cabal, et al; Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 1412

⁷ "Discrepancy", Merriam-Webster.com, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discrepancy> (January 17, 2016)

Contradictions⁸

- A contradiction is “a difference or disagreement between two things which means that both cannot be true”⁹
- A contradiction is a proposition and its negation (A and not A), at the same time and in the same relationship: A and not A cannot both be true at the same time
 - A and not A could both be true at different times
 - A and not A could both be true at the same time *if the relationship or sense of the word is different
- Some “contradictions” are actually not – they aren’t **logical** problems, they are **psychological** problems (i.e. disbelief in miracles)
- Most “contradictions” are really errors in logic*; for example,
 - Difference of **sense/relationship** (*Romans 4:2-3 and James 2:21,24 - justification*)
 - False Dilemma
 - Contextual Considerations
 - Fallacy of Sweeping Generalization
 - Translation Issues
 - Contradictions of Inference
 - Factual Contradictions

How to Handle Contradictions / Unresolved Questions

1. Clarify a passage by examining its **context**
2. Clarify a passage by using **clear** passages to examine the unclear
3. Absence of evidence isn’t **evidence of absence**
4. Be charitable toward the **author**
5. What the Bible **describes** is often different from what it **prescribes**
6. The author may be using a literary **strategy**, making a particular theological **point**, or just **observing** (journalistic precision isn’t always his concern)
7. Be content to live with **unanswered questions**

Discussion

Can there be degrees of inerrancy?

- Absolute Inerrancy
- Limited Inerrancy
- No Inerrancy

⁸ Ken Ham; Bodie Hodge. How Do We Know the Bible is True? (Kindle Location 4352). Master Books.

⁹ “Contradiction”, Merriam-Webster.com, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contradiction> (January 17, 2016)

What about some of those “contradictions”?

Complaint	Scripture
Ecclesiastes says that we are upright, while Psalms says that we are sinners.	God made man upright (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity (Psalm 51:5).
<p>Discussion</p> <p><i>A difference in context. Ecclesiastes is referring to Adam & Eve (how man was originally created). David is writing of his own sinful nature in the Psalm.</i></p>	
Complaint	Scripture
<p>In the Book of Leviticus, bats are described as birds.</p> <p>Moses says insects have four legs, whereas we know they have six.</p> <p>Lev 11:13-22 (NKJV)</p>	<p>13 And these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, 14 the kite, and the falcon after its kind; 15 every raven after its kind, 16 the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the sea gull, and the hawk after its kind; 17 the little owl, the fisher owl, and the screech owl; 18 the white owl, the jackdaw, and the carrion vulture; 19 the stork, the heron after its kind, the hoopoe, and the bat. 20 All flying insects that creep on all fours shall be an abomination to you. 21 Yet these you may eat of every flying insect that creeps on all fours: those which have jointed legs above their feet with which to leap on the earth. 22 These you may eat: the locust after its kind, the destroying locust after its kind, the cricket after its kind, and the grasshopper after its kind.</p>
<p>Discussion</p> <p><i>Translation (the Hebrew word translated as “bird” in v.13 literally means “has a wing” so bats can be included. “On all fours” is a figure of speech referring to the posture of the insect, not the actual number of legs.</i></p>	
Complaint	Scripture
Why are people called fools in Scripture even though Jesus told us not to call people fools?	<p>Jesus proclaimed “whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matt 5:22). David wrote, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 14:1). Paul told the Galatians they were foolish (Galatians 3:1). Jesus even said the Pharisees and scribes were fools (Matthew 23:17).</p>
<p>Discussion</p> <p><i>Context is key. Jesus explained that our actions and our heart (motives) will be judged. In cases where it is He calling someone a fool, there is a righteous reason behind it.</i></p>	
Complaint	Scripture
So are we supposed to “answer a fool” or not?	Proverbs 26:4-5
<p>Discussion</p>	