

# The Inerrancy of the Bible

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## Introduction

Would you call someone “reliable” who:

- ✓ Was frequently mistaken on what he believed and said?
- ✓ Contradicted himself many times?
- ✓ Deliberately and knowingly lied to you on many occasions?
- ✓ Made up stories whenever it suited him?

Would you continue to trust his word after being deceived by him again and again? I don’t think so! Yet, this is what liberal theologians ask us to do with the Bible!

Liberal theologians claim:

- ✓ The authors of the Bible were often mistaken in what they believed and wrote.
- ✓ They frequently contradicted themselves and other biblical writers.
- ✓ They deliberately and knowingly tried to deceive people into thinking that their books were written by such famous men as Moses, Daniel, Matthew, Paul, etc. (1992, R.A. Morey)
- ✓ They made up details of the birth, life, sermons, miracle, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- ✓ They fabricated a new theology around their fabricated Christ and created a new religion called Christianity, which Jesus would have never recognized.

### I. The Reliability of Scripture

When Christian theologians use such words as “infallibility” and “inerrancy,” they are simply saying that the Bible is reliable in everything it records. Thus you can count on the Bible because it is true, factual, real and historical. The Bible is:

- ✓ A reliable record of the experience and beliefs of the biblical authors.  
Illustration: In the book of Romans, we have a reliable record of what the Apostle Paul experienced and believed.
- ✓ A reliable record of the beliefs and experiences of other people.  
Illustration: The beliefs and practices of the Pharisees are described in the Gospels ([Mark 7:3-4](#)).
- ✓ A reliable record of the lies and false ideas of men and demons.  
Illustration: [Gen. 3:4](#); [Job 42:7](#)
- ✓ A reliable record of the good things that people do.  
Illustration: Dorcas ([Acts 9:36-39](#))
- ✓ A reliable record of the evil things that people do.  
Illustration: The rape of Dinah ([Gen. 34:1-2](#))
- ✓ A reliable record of the historical events—natural and supernatural—which surrounded the rise and progress of the people of God. Illustration: The Creation, the fall, the Flood, the Tower, the Patriarchs, the Exodus, the rise, fall and return of Israel, the life of Christ, and the expansion of the early church into Europe.
- ✓ A reliable record of biblical authorship.  
Illustration: Isaiah, Daniel, Matthew, etc.
- ✓ A reliable record of what God revealed to the authors of Scripture.  
Illustration: [Gal. 1:1, 11-12](#).

- ✓ A reliable record which does not contradict itself.  
Illustration: [2 Pet. 2:20-21](#).
- ✓ A reliable record of what we must believe to be saved and how to live the Christian life.  
Illustration: [Acts 4; 12; Rom. 12:1-2](#).

## II. Common questions about inerrancy

- ✓ “Should we interpret the Bible literally?” Answer: No. The Bible contains many different kinds of literature: history, poetry, prophecy, doctrine and ethics. Figurative language is frequently used.
- ✓ “If it is in the Bible, is it true?” Answer: No. The Bible is a reliable record of the lies and false ideas of men and demons as well as a record of the truth. A verse must be interpreted in the light of its context.  
Illustration: Ecclesiastes.
- ✓ “If it is in the Bible, is it good?” Answer: No. The Bible records many evil things, which it condemns.  
Illustration: Rape, cannibalism, murder, etc.
- ✓ “Is the Bible a textbook on history, science, mathematics, biology, etc.?” Answer: No. The writing of textbooks was not the intent of the authors of the Bible. But whenever they do touch on such areas, they are reliable.
- ✓ “Can we judge the Bible by today’s literary standards?” Answer: No. Each book of the Bible must be judged by the literary standards of the age in which it was written.  
Illustration: Paul’s name at the beginning of his letters. Moses’ use of the third person.
- ✓ “Are the Gospels biographies of Christ?” Answer: No. The modern idea of writing a chronologically structured “biography” was unknown in the first century. It was not the intent of the gospel writers to write a “biography” of Jesus in the modern sense.

Each gospel writer selected certain things from the life of Christ to illustrate a particular theme that he wanted to convey to a specific audience he had in mind. He would arrange these things in a way to highlight his message, thus they did not try to give a precise chronology of the words or actions of Christ. For example, [Matthew](#) groups together all the kingdom parables in [chapter 13](#) regardless of when they were given. He structured his gospel account to certain themes—not chronology.

<b>Book</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Audience</b>
Matthew:	What did Jesus say?	The Jews
Mark:	What did Jesus do?	The Romans
Luke:	Who followed Jesus?	The Greeks
John:	Who was Jesus?	The Christians

- ✓ “If two or more accounts of the same incident are different in any way, are they contradictory?” Answer: No. Differing accounts can be supplementary and not contradictory. Liberals assume that if two or more accounts “differ” in any details, they automatically are “contradictory.” But this is a common logical fallacy. When two or more accounts of the same incident are given by different individuals, they will always “differ” in some details. But these “differences” only supplement each other and once they are put together, they give us the whole picture. Different accounts by different people will usually differ for the following reasons:

- a. The accounts are given from different viewpoints. Example: Four people see an accident from four different corners.
- b. People are emphasizing different things. Example: Political, society and gossip reporters' accounts of a Washington party.
- c. When one account is written after the others and it adds new information that was not available before, this is not contradictory but supplementary.
- d. The intent of a person must be recognized.
  1. If he did not intend to put things in a chronological order, but to group things thematically, he cannot be faulted.
  2. If he did not intend to give a literal word for word quotation but to summarize a sermon in his own words, or to paraphrase a statement in order to emphasize its meaning, he cannot be faulted.
  3. If he did not intend to give an exact numerical count, but to round things off to the nearest whole number, he cannot be faulted.
  4. If he did not intend to use literal language, but to use figurative language in a description of something, he cannot be faulted.
- e. The audience must also be taken into account. We do not speak to a child in the same way we speak to an adult. What we say in a court is more formal than a casual conversation with a friend. When one audience is Jewish and another is Gentile, different terminology may be used given the different backgrounds.
- f. Leaving out those details which do not fit in with your theme is perfectly normal. Example: A black history course which only describes black inventors is not erroneous because it omits any reference to white inventors.
- g. When one account mentions one person while another account mentions more than one, there is no logical contradiction if the first account does not say "only" one person was present. The author is simply emphasizing the presence of one person without denying the presence of others.

✓ "But how about when Matthew says that two blind men were healed while Mark and Luke say that only one was healed?"

✓ Answer: It must be pointed out that you added the word "only" to the accounts. This is a point of logic that must be emphasized. Neither Mark nor Luke said that "only" one blind man was healed. They just tell the story of the one man whose name was known as Bartimaeus. Matthew mentions in passing that there was a second blind man healed. They supplement each other.  
There is no logical contradiction.

✓ "Mark 10:46 says that his healing took place as Jesus approached Jericho, while Matthew 20:30 says that it took place as He was leaving Jericho. You can't be approaching and leaving a city at the same time. Isn't this a clear contradiction?"

Answer: No. Archaeology has discovered that when the Romans tried to set up a base in Jericho, the Jews rioted so much that the Romans went down the road about two miles and set up their own settlement, which they also called Jericho. Thus the word "Jericho" in New Testament times referred to two settlements: one Jewish and one Gentile. The merchants and beggars would gather between the two settlements to catch the traffic going either way. In this light, it is clear that the healing took place after Jesus had left the Jewish

Jericho but before He got to the Gentile Jericho. In other words, it took place between the Jewish and Gentile sections of Jericho. Since Matthew was writing to the Jews, he referred to the Jewish section of Jericho. And, since Mark was writing to the Gentiles, he referred to the Gentile section of Jericho, thus, there is no contradiction.

- ✓ “But the New Testament authors frequently misquote the Old Testament. Is this not a clear contradiction?”  
Answer: No. The modern literary practice of giving an exact quotation of someone’s words was not practiced in the first century. The biblical authors, like the rabbis, would paraphrase (i.e. put into their own words) an O.T. text in order to emphasize its meaning. They had just as much right to paraphrase the Bible as we do today.
  
- ✓ “But what if the wording of what Jesus or someone else said is different from one gospel to the other? Answer: The authors of Scripture plainly stated that they did not record the full text of what Jesus or others said ([John 21:24-25](#)). They usually summarized in their own words what people said. They did not usually quote verbatim. ([Illustration: Matt. 5-7; Acts 2](#))
  
- ✓ “But what about all the numbers and names that contradict each other in [1 and 2 Kings](#) and [1 and 2 Chronicles](#)?”  
Answer: Divine inspiration only covers the authors of Scripture and what they originally wrote—not all the copyists since that time. Logically speaking, the existence of simple copyist errors in numbers and names cannot negate the inspiration of the original text.
  
- ✓ “What if something or someone in the Bible is not mentioned in extra-biblical literature? Is this a contradiction? Answer: It is illogical to say that something or someone mentioned in the Bible did not exist because we do not have extra-biblical confirmation. Archaeology has a nasty habit of crushing these kinds of arguments. Example: No writing in Moses’ day; no Hittites, etc. Some liberals claim that the town of Nazareth mentioned in the New Testament did not exist at that time because the Talmud and Josephus did not mention it. They are wrong for several reasons.
  - a) This is a logical fallacy because it is an argument from silence. Did the Talmud and Josephus mention every town in Israel? No.
  - b) They are evidently ignorant of the “Nazareth stone,” which archaeologists found in 1878, which must be dated A.D. 45-54. The stone proves that Nazareth existed at that time.
  - c) While the Talmud does not use the noun “Nazareth,” it does use the adjective “Notzri” as in “Jesus ha-Notzri.” The word “Notzri” comes from the word Nazareth.

### **Conclusion**

The Bible is reliable in all it records because its authors were sovereignly guided in what they wrote by God himself, and hence infallible and inerrant. You can trust the Bible.

## Recommended CD Series: The Bible From A to Z



Does the structure of the Bible have any significance? Is it really God's Word? How did we get the Bible? Does the Bible have any errors? This audio series will not only amaze you, but you will be confident that the Bible you hold in your hand is a gift from God directly to you.



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