

How Do We Know the Bible is True? The Reliability and Inspiration of Scripture

Introduction: Why This Matters

The Bible is the foundation of our faith, but many challenge its reliability. Skeptics claim it is full of contradictions, outdated, or simply a human invention. Others argue that only some parts are inspired, while some Christians doubt whether we can truly trust the Bible. If the Bible is not entirely true, then our faith loses its authority. However, if it is truly the inspired Word of God, then it has ultimate authority over our lives. This study will explore the inspiration, reliability, and sufficiency of Scripture.

1. The Inspiration of Scripture: God's Word, Not Man's (Theology of Inspiration)

A. What is Inspiration?

Inspiration means that the Bible is **God-breathed**, meaning its words come from God Himself.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

- "Breathed out by God" (Greek: *theopneustos*) means Scripture originates from **God's very mouth**.
- This affirms **plenary inspiration**, meaning **all Scripture** is equally inspired—not just the "spiritual" parts.

B. Scripture Was Written by Men, But Fully Inspired by God

2 Peter 1:20-21 – "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."

- The Bible is **both divine and human**, written by real people but **guided perfectly by the Holy Spirit**.
- The phrase "carried along" (Greek: *phero*) means that **God ensured their words were exactly what He intended**.
- This means the Bible is **without error** (*inerrant*) and fully **authoritative**.

C. Jesus' View of Inspiration

Jesus affirmed that **every word of Scripture is from God and cannot be broken**.

Matthew 5:18 – "For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

John 10:35 – "If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—"

- Jesus treated the **entire Old Testament as authoritative**, down to the smallest letter.
- He also **promised the New Testament**, saying the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles in writing it (**John 14:26**).

Charles Spurgeon: "If I did not believe in the infallibility of Scripture, the ship of my faith would be at sea without a chart or compass."

2. The Reliability of Scripture: Can We Trust the Bible We Have Today?

A. The Preservation of the Bible

Isaiah 40:8 – "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

- The **Bible has been preserved** through thousands of years, despite persecution and attempts to destroy it.
- We have **thousands of manuscripts** of the Old and New Testament, making it the **most well-attested document** in ancient history.

B. The Accuracy of Biblical Manuscripts

The Bible is more reliable than any ancient text based on **manuscript evidence**:

- **New Testament**: Over 5,800 Greek manuscripts, some dating **within 30 years** of original writing.
- **Old Testament**: The Dead Sea Scrolls confirm the **remarkable accuracy** of transmission.
- **Comparison**: Other ancient writings (e.g., Plato, Aristotle) have far fewer manuscripts and longer time gaps.

F.F. Bruce: "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament."

C. Archaeological and Historical Evidence

- **Hittites**: Once thought to be a biblical myth, later confirmed by archaeology.
- **King David**: The Tel Dan inscription confirmed David was a real historical figure.
- **Jesus' Crucifixion**: Confirmed by Roman historians (Tacitus, Josephus).
- **The Pool of Bethesda** (John 5:2) was dismissed as fictional until its remains were discovered.
- **The Cyrus Cylinder** confirms the Persian king's decree to allow exiles to return, aligning with Ezra 1:1-4.

These discoveries show that the Bible records **real historical events**, not myths or fables. The consistency between biblical accounts and external sources strengthens the argument that Scripture is divinely preserved and historically accurate.

Furthermore, the **internal consistency** of Scripture across 66 books, written over 1,500 years by more than 40 authors, further demonstrates that the Bible was **not merely a human project**, but divinely orchestrated.

Josh McDowell: "The Bible is not just a book of religious inspiration; it is an accurate historical record that has been verified time and again."

3. How the Authority of Scripture Affects Our Lives and Culture

A. The Bible is Our Final Authority

Psalms 119:105 – "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

- The Bible is not just a historical book; it **speaks with authority over our beliefs, morality, and daily life**.
- If Scripture is truly God's Word, we must submit to it **above culture, feelings, and human wisdom**.

B. The Cultural Challenge: Relativism vs. Absolute Truth

- Modern culture says **truth is subjective**, but the Bible teaches **absolute truth**.
- When people reject biblical authority, **morality becomes unstable** (e.g., views on marriage, gender, and justice shift over time).
- Jesus grounded His teachings in **Scripture's unchanging truth** (**Matthew 4:4** – "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.").

C. Application: Living Under the Bible's Authority

1. **Submit to Scripture in daily decisions** – If the Bible is true, it should shape how we think, act, and live.
2. **Defend the faith with confidence** – Be ready to explain why we trust the Bible (**1 Peter 3:15**).
3. **Teach the next generation** – The Bible must be passed down faithfully, not watered down (**Deuteronomy 6:6-7**).

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean that the Bible is "God-breathed"? How does this affect how we read it?
2. How would you respond to someone who says the Bible is just a human book?
3. What evidence strengthens your confidence in the Bible's reliability?
4. How does living under the authority of Scripture challenge the way we engage with culture?
5. What are practical ways we can deepen our trust in God's Word?

Recommended Books

- **Kevin DeYoung** – *Taking God at His Word*
- **John MacArthur** – *The Inerrant Word*
- **F.F. Bruce** – *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*
- **Wayne Grudem** – *Systematic Theology* (Chapters on Scripture)