

How Reliable is the Bible?

There are three important pillars that support confidence in Scripture's reliability, the first of which is inerrancy.

Inerrancy

A fundamental feature of inerrancy that needs to be embraced is infallibility. This simply means that the Scriptures are exempt from error; they are unfailing. Not only are they without error, they are unable to err.

Since the Bible's source is God, its truthfulness, accuracy, and inerrancy are anchored in the character of God. The God who breathed out the Word (inspiration) is true; He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). The Son of God who brought truth to the remembrance of New Testament writers is Truth (Jn 14:6). The Holy Spirit of God, the Agent in inspiration, is the Spirit of Truth (1 Jn 5:6-7).

Inerrancy applies to the original writings (autographs). All copies will contain some weakness, even small errors due to transmission and translation difficulties. Yet we know that over 99% of the original manuscripts said. We believe in errorless originals, which can be reproduced accurately by careful comparison of manuscripts (textual criticism). To recognize errors in modern translation is simply to admit the frailty of copyists and translators who were not inspired by the Holy Spirit, as the prophets and apostles were. There are no doctrines that have been compromised. To the extent that our modern translations represent the originals, we have a sure word from God.

Inspiration

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (2 Tim 3:16). Scripture (graphe) referred to all known Scripture (cf. Lk 24:25-27, 44-45). Inspiration (theopneustos) is used only once and may mislead people's thinking if they are not cautious. The word could better be understood as "expired" or "out-breathed. The words of Scripture actually came from a source apart from those who wrote them down. Literally, God breathed out the very words of Scripture. In the Old Testament, this word speaks of God's actual breath (cf. Gen 2:7; Job 33:4).

The writers had characteristics common to all people created in God's image. They had the ability to communicate the pattern their thoughts after His. Furthermore, they had unique perspectives prepared in advance by divine providence:

1. Divine guidance extended to remote ancestors. Writing Scripture was no last minute whim. God in His eternal plan, directed each writer's life so that the prophet or apostle He chose would be exactly who He wanted.
2. God gave each writer his own unique perspective. Each one was influenced by the time, place, heredity, and education he received.
3. Their life situations were superintended as well. God provided for their material needs and protected them from sinful disqualification. Finally, He saw fit to call them into their particular ministries.

Rather than looking for supernatural acts of God in preserving His inspired Word, we must embrace God's providential guidance in the process.

Sufficiency

Many Christians and churches verbally affirm that the Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. However, in reality people evidence that it is not the final authority in their lives. The sufficiency of Scripture is attacked in numerous man-made ways:

- Psychology-man's wisdom
- Church growth's pragmatism-man's methods
- Feelings-man's experience

So what does Scripture teach about its own sufficiency? It equips for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17). It provides everything needed for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3). It is perfect, fully-orbed, complete, with no omission...resulting in renewal and transformation of the whole person (Ps 19:7a). It is trustworthy...giving skill for living (Ps 19:7b). It is right...bringing rejoicing to the heart (Ps 19:8a). It is pure...giving light to the eyes, guiding man's ways, and making sense of nonsense (Ps 19:8b). It is clean, without error...enduring forever, timeless, and limitless (Ps 19:9a). It is true...bringing forth comprehensive righteousness (Ps 19:9b).

Since the Bible is without error and is given by God for what man is to believe and obey it should fill the heart and life of every Christian. Man should seek for wisdom in the Scriptures alone as he studies and obeys it, for the glory of God.

Recommended Resources:

Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible-Don Kistler

Seven Reasons Why You Can Trust the Bible-Erwin Lutzer

How Readest Thou?-J. C. Ryle

Unleashing God's Word in Your Life & Why Believe the Bible?-John MacArthur

The Inerrant Word-John MacArthur

The Scripture Cannot Be Broken-John MacArthur

Inerrancy-Norman Geisler

Biblical Authority-John Woodbridge

Fundamentalism and the Word of God-J. I. Packer

The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible-B. B. Warfield

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