



**Understanding the Doctrine  
of  
Inerrancy & Infallibility**

# Inerrancy & Infallibility

## A Definition of Biblical Inerrancy

Historically, the Christian church has believed that the bible is totally without error and is therefore infallible. In more recent times, however, some people are wavering on this assertion, teaching instead that where the bible mentions geography, history and creation it may not be accurate. Some critics have said that only where the bible speaks of the person of God and doctrine is it inspired.

Inerrancy, simply means that ***the Bible is without error***. According to theologian Wayne Grudem, it's a belief in the "total truthfulness and reliability of God's words"

*(Systematic Theology, Inter-Varsity, 2004, 90)*

Jesus said, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). This inerrancy isn't just in passages that speak about salvation, but also applies to all historical and scientific statements as well. It is not only accurate in matters related to faith and practice, but it is accurate and without error regarding any statement

<https://defendinginerrancy.com/why-is-inerrancy-important> (Accessed August 24, 2021)

## Practical Relevance of Biblical Inerrancy

There was a time when it was not known that oil existed in the Middle East in general and Egypt in particular. The story of the initial discovery is a remarkable demonstration of one man's faith in the integrity and infallibility of the Biblical record

Charles Whitsholt, one of the directors of the Standard Oil company was a Christian who practiced reading the Scriptures. One day, while he was reading through the book of Exodus, one verse particularly stood out to him. He was reading concerning Jochebed, the mother of Moses, "*And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink*" (Exod. 2:3).

Being an oil man, Whitsholt's mind went into overdrive when he read the word "pitch." He knew pitch was a by-product of oil, and if a slave could find pitch in Egypt, there must be oil somewhere nearby. On the basis of that one word in just one verse, Charles Whitsholt was sent to Egypt to search for evidence of an oil field. The rest is a matter of historical record as he discovered the largest deposits of crude oil then known to man.

The amazing accuracy and reliability of the bible is the natural by-product of supernatural inspiration

## Internal Evidence for Inerrancy & Infallibility

Internal evidence refers to evidence found within the pages of the bible itself as opposed to external evidence which arises from sources outside the biblical text such as history, archaeology, etc. Internal evidence for inerrancy is found in the pastoral epistles, the book of II Peter, the book of Acts and the book of Hebrews. Statements attributed to Jesus in at least 3 of the 4 gospels confirm the certainty of the inerrancy of the scriptures.

## **The Apostles Believed in Inerrancy**

When New Testament writers quoted the Old Testament they considered that they were quoting God. This attitude is seen in one of the prayers of the early church;

*“And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: **Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said**, Why did the heathen rage, And the people imagine vain things?” (Acts 4.24-25)*

In his pastoral epistle to young Timothy, Paul encourages him with the following words;

*“All scripture is given by **inspiration of God** ..... ” (II Timothy 3.16)*

In Peter’s second epistle;

*“Holy men of God spoke as they were **moved by the Holy Spirit**” (II Peter 1.21)*

The author of the book of Hebrews;

*“Wherefore, **as the Holy Spirit said**, today if you will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years” (Hebrews 3.7-9)*

Paul was in no doubt that he was proclaiming the inerrant Word of God;

*“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are **the commandments of the Lord**” (I Cor 14.37)*

## **Jesus testified to biblical inerrancy**

When he was tempted in the wilderness by Satan to commit sin, three times He said;

*“It is written ... “ (Matthew 4.1-11) and went on to quote Old Testament scripture*

Jesus appealed to the scriptures to defend His actions;

*“But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him and fled” (Matthew 26.54-56)*

On another occasion;

*“Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and **the scripture cannot be broken;**”*

Jesus believed that every letter of scripture was absolutely accurate;

*“till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5.18)*

## **External Evidence for Inerrancy & Infallibility**

Human history, archaeology and fulfilled prophecy are external evidence of the reliability of the scripture.

### **Human History**

Wherever there has been a conflict between the bible and other non-biblical documents of antiquity, further enquiry has always shown the bible to be reliable. The bible was, in fact, largely written by eyewitnesses to the events they recorded (II Peter 1.16; I John 1.1-3). Most historians, like Luke (Luke 1.1-4) sought to uncover primary sources when they were preparing to write about historical events. An excellent example is the nativity of Christ which Luke covers in very significant detail. He did have Mary available to him for consultation and no doubt he took full advantage of such a profoundly reliable primary source. Luke's writings and those of the other gospel writers were in fact recorded by those who had been eyewitnesses to the accounts they were writing about. In any court of law today that would be considered *prima facie* reliable evidence.

### **Archaeology**

Increasingly across the last 100 years, the science of archaeology has been instrumental in attesting to the striking accuracy of the bible. Such discoveries as the Dead Sea scrolls, locations and structures mentioned in the scriptures and coinage with inscriptions, etc have attested to the accuracy and reliability of the scriptures. Professor H.H.Rowling (1890-1969) was a renowned Old Testament scholar who served on the mission field as Associate Professor of Old Testament in Shantung Christian University, China. Of the effect of archaeology and biblical scholarship he observes;

*“It is not because scholars of today begin with more conservative presuppositions than their predecessors that they have a much greater respect for the patriarchal stories than was formerly common, but because the evidence warrants it”*

Sir Frederic George Kenyon was a British palaeographer (*the study of ancient writing systems and the deciphering and dating of historical manuscripts*) as well as a biblical and classical scholar. He held a series of posts at the British Museum from 1889 to 1931. He was also the president of the British Academy from 1917 to 1921. In relation to archaeology and the bible he observes;

*“Archaeology has not yet said its last word; but the results already achieved confirm what faith would suggest, that the bible can do nothing but gain from an increase of knowledge”*

## Fulfilled Prophecy

While many biblical prophecies have and are being fulfilled even today (especially in Israel), hundreds of such prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus. The likelihood that such a huge plethora of prophecies originating from so many eras of human history which were fulfilled by Jesus could be coincidence is in the order of  $10^{23}$

The following chart illustrates just a small sample of such prophetic fulfillment

Event	Foretold	Fulfilled
Virgin birth	Isa 7.14	Matt 1.23
Descendant of Abraham	Gen 12.2-3	Matt 1.1
Birthplace	Mic 5.2	Matt 2.1
Miracles performed	Isa 35.5-6	Matt 9.35
Use of parables	Psalms 78.2	Matt 13.34
Resurrection	Psalms 16.10	Acts 2.31
Betrayed by friend	Psalms 41.9	Matt 10.4
Crucified with thieves	Isa 53.12	Matt 27.38
Prayed for persecutors	Isa 53.12	Luke 23.34
Gambling at the cross	Psalms 22.18	John 19.23-24