



Questions for God

Part 4 – Inerrancy... Does the Bible Have Errors?

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Last week looked at the inspiration of the Bible. We know that God inspired the writers, but is what they wrote without error?

I. How was the Old Testament copied?

- A. The Problem: Are there errors in transmission since there is 2400 years separating the originals and today?
- B. The Process: The Old Testament was copied with such precision that, when an entire scroll had been copied by hand, one letter at a time, if one mistake was made, the scroll was destroyed. In addition, the Jewish copyists of the Hebrew Scriptures adhered to detailed requirements in copying:
 - 1. Each copy had to be made on a brand new writing surface and had to be prepared in a specific way;
 - 2. Each copy had to be written in a certain number of columns of 30 letters wide, written right above each other so if there was a mistake made, it was known immediately;
 - 3. Each copy had to be written in a certain color and quality of ink;
 - 4. Each copy had to be made from an authenticated original;
 - 5. Not even the tiniest letter could be written from memory, as one would glance at the word “to” and write the letters “t” and “o” before glancing back at the original, but *every* letter was copied singularly from the original;
 - 6. No letter could connect with or overlap another letter;
 - 7. Every letter of every page and book was counted and compared against the original. The number of times each

letter of the alphabet occurred in a book was counted and compared against the original.

8. The middle letter of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) and the middle letter of the entire Hebrew Bible were computed and indicated in the text. If *one* of these calculations was incorrect, they took the entire scroll, destroyed it and started over

II. What is the reliability of the New Testament?

Manuscript duplication:

Author	Written	Earliest Copies	Time Span	# of Copies
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,200 yrs.	7
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1,000	1,400 yrs.	100
Homer	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs.	643
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1,100	1,500 yrs.	9
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1,100	1,400 yrs.	5
<u>N.T</u>	<u>A.D. 40-100</u>	<u>A.D. 125</u>	<u>25 yrs.</u>	<u>24,000+</u>

The interval, then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.

Sir Frederic Kenyon, a world-renowned scholar of the ancient manuscripts

A. Manuscript Transmission: How we got the NT?

1. **The Originals autographs** (50-90 A.D.)
2. **Papyrus manuscripts** (early copies – 90-300 A.D.)
 - Papyrus was the common material used for writing purposes at the beginning of the Christian era.

- It was made from reeds and was highly durable.
- In the last 500 years many remains of documents written on papyrus have been discovered, including fragments of manuscripts of the New Testament.

3. **Uncial manuscripts** (300-800 A.D.)

- Put them on better paper, antelope skins, vellum.
- They were also called Codex copies.

4. **Minuscule manuscripts** (800-1400 A.D.)

- The uncial manuscripts were expensive, not a lot of people could afford these things, so thousands of what they called minuscule manuscripts began to be written.
- They were written in cursive handwriting, very small so that they could save paper.

5. **Printed Bibles** (1456-present)

B. How do we know the NT reflects the original text?

1. The discovery of the *Codex Sinaiticus* (350 A.D.)

- They contain almost all of the NT and half of the OT.
- Virtually no differences found and those that were scribal copying not differences in translation or content.

2. The discovery of the *Codex Ephraimi* (345 A.D.)

- The second oldest complete text of the NT
- Currently found in Paris

3. The discovery of the *Codex Vaticanus* (325 A.D.)

- Discovered in 1475 in the Vatican Library
- Written in Greek and dated at 325 A.D. this is the oldest complete New Testament ever found.

4. **The discovery of papyrus fragments (as early as 90 A.D.!)**

Carsten Thiede, the German scroll expert declares: *There are now over 100 papyri at museums and libraries. The gospels are more authentic than we thought. The gap between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith is not as great as academics have claimed.*

Millard Burrows of Yale says: *Another result of comparing New Testament Greek with the language of the papyri [discoveries] is an increase of confidence in the accurate transmission of the text of the New Testament itself.*

III. What is Inerrancy?

A. A Definition:

1. Wayne Grudem defines inerrancy in the following way: *“The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact... The definition in simple terms just means that the Bible always tells the truth, and that it always tells the truth concerning everything it talks about.”*
2. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy asserts, *“Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.”* *Belief in biblical inerrancy is the certainty that all the words in the Bible are God's words, completely true and without error in any part.*

B. A Distinction: What Inerrancy Does Not Mean

1. Inerrancy does not mean that the Bible tells us everything there is to **know** about every topic.
“Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

2. Don't equate a lack of **precision** with error.

Inerrancy has to do with the truthfulness, not the degree of precision with which events are reported.

Ex. rounding up numbers to describe the size of the crowd.

C. A Determination: 5 evidences that support inerrancy

1. **Internal consistency:** Does the Bible contradict itself?

There exists no document from the ancient world witnessed by so excellent a set of textual and historical testimonies, and offering so superb an array of historical data on which an intelligent decision may be made. An honest (person) cannot dismiss a source of this kind. Skepticism regarding the historical credentials of Christianity is based upon an irrational (i.e., anti-supernatural) bias.

Dr. Clark H. Pinnock, professor of systematic theology at Regent College

- Ask your critics to name one!
- Two statements may differ without being contradictory.
- Note: Grammatical constructions and scribal errors.
- No essential doctrine is involved in even the most "questioned" portions of Scripture. (Mark 16:9-20 or John 7:53, 8:11)

2. **Fulfilled prophecies:**

- Jesus Christ alone fulfilled 300 prophecies.

3. **Historical accuracy:** Does archaeology support the reliability of the Bible?

- "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."
Nelson Glueck
- The Dead Sea scrolls discovery in 1947 substantiates the accuracy of transmission of the Old Testament.

- Even without New Testament manuscripts almost the entire New Testament could be reproduced from the church fathers' writings.
- Not a single archaeological discovery has contradicted the biblical record. Time is on our side!
- Ex. Sodom didn't exist?
- Mosaic manuscripts... no written language?

4. **Changed lives**

IV. **So what difference does all this make?**

- A. You can declare with confidence that Bible is **reliable** and trustworthy. You don't have to "check your brain at the door", when discussing these topics with the skeptics.
- B. It is authority extends to your life personally! Don't be **educated** beyond your obedience (James 1:22-24).

John Erwin ■ Senior Pastor ■ Moorpark Evangelical Free Church