

Understanding Theology in 15 Minutes A Day for 40 Days

Day 4

What Are the Implications of the Bible Being the Word of God?

If the Bible is in fact God's Word, then there are very important implications we must consider. Scripture itself presents some of these implications. The following are just a few.

The Bible Is True

Because God is always truthful and correct in whatever he says (**2 Samuel 7:28; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18**), his Word also is truthful and correct in whatever it says (**Psalm 12:6; Proverbs 30:5**). Jesus said to his Father, *"Your word is truth"* (**John 17:17**). He does not just say God's Word is true but rather equates it with truth itself—*ultimate* Truth. Theologically, this is to say that the Bible is *inerrant*, that is, without error.

Jesus' own understanding of this can be seen in **John 10**. When he claimed deity for himself, saying, *"I and the Father are one"* (**v. 30**), the Jews picked up stones to execute him for blasphemy. Jesus then said,

Is it not written in your Law, "I have said you are gods"? If he called them "gods," to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be set aside—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, "I am God's Son"?

vv. 34–36

Jesus said Scripture *"cannot be broken"* (**v. 35 NASB**), that is, cannot be shown to be false or wrong in any way. Furthermore, he backs up this claim on the basis of one word—*gods* (*elohim*)—in the middle of **verse 6 of Psalm 82**. He was staking his own life on the "unbreakableness" of one word from one verse in the Hebrew Bible! If this is the nature of just one word in Scripture, how much more so the whole.

This view has been expressed by renowned Christian thinkers from early on. For example, Augustine wrote, "I firmly believe that no single error due to the [biblical] author is found in

any one of [the canonical books].” Martin Luther quoted this statement in agreement and added, “The Scriptures have never erred” and “The Scripture *cannot* err.”

The Bible Is Trustworthy

Because God is faithful and always can be trusted to do what he says (**Numbers 23:19; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:24**), the Bible, as the Word of God, also can be trusted (**2 Samuel 7:28**). The theological way of saying this is that the Bible is *infallible*. This word frequently gets used as a synonym for *inerrant*, but, more precisely, it says more by taking an additional step (based on inerrancy): Because the Bible is without error, it will never fail in its message or purpose, nor will it ever cause anyone to fail, be led into error, or be fooled into believing something unworthy of belief. Jesus made a startling statement that reflects this idea:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Matthew 5:17–18

When Jesus referred to the “Law or the Prophets,” he had in mind all of the Scriptures then available—what we call the Old Testament. His assertion, then, was that from those Scriptures, not the smallest letter or least pen stroke would be lost. The “smallest letter” in the language Jesus spoke was a *yodh*, or Y. It would look to us like an apostrophe (’), written at the top of a line of letters with just a flick of the wrist. The “least stroke of a pen” was a part of a letter that distinguishes it from another letter. If we start with a P and add a stroke at the bottom, we end up with an R. If we start with an I and add a stroke at the top, we end up with a T. Jesus is saying that until the end of time, God will protect and preserve his written Word down to individual words, tiny little letters, even parts of letters! He would not do this unless it were all true and trustworthy (**see also Matthew 24:35**).

Some evangelical theologians prefer to speak of the Bible as infallible but *not* inerrant. They mean that while the Bible is truthful and trustworthy in matters of faith and practice—that is, what Christians must believe to be saved and how they are to live—there may be errors regarding history, geography, or science. This view is sometimes called “limited inerrancy,” meaning inerrancy limited to areas of faith and practice.

The **International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI)** was founded in 1977 to defend the traditional view of the Bible's complete inerrancy. In their "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," they replied to this view (which rejects inerrancy but affirms infallibility) as follows:

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses. We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XI

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science.

Article XII

Indeed, it would seem, (AND IS), that complete infallibility and complete inerrancy must necessarily go together. History has shown that when it is alleged that Scripture contains even one or more minimal errors, gradually and eventually more and more *supposed* "errors" are perceived, even in areas of faith and practice. To embrace this conjecture without a basis of truth or proof would make the entire word of God unreliable.

Bible Is a Unity

Because the Bible ultimately comes from one source and mind (God's), it reflects a perfect harmony of thought. Thus, it contains no contradictions, as there are no contradictions in God's mind. One portion will never contradict any other; a biblical text will always agree with and complement all others.

With typical bluntness, Luther wrote, "It is impossible that Scripture should contradict itself, only that it so appears to the senseless and obstinate hypocrites." This is not to deny that the Bible will sometimes *seem* to contradict itself, but as Augustine wisely said, "When I am confronted in these Books with anything that seems to be at variance with truth, I put it down ... to my own mistaken understanding of the passage."

FUN FACT

I jokingly say that "limited inerrancy" is like me claiming "partial omniscience"—that is, I know absolutely everything, except those things I do not know. "Limited inerrancy" says there are no errors in Scripture, except where there are errors.