

The Bible Is Not Inerrant, Not Infallible: A Comprehensive Case with LDS Perspective

A Scholarly Argument with LDS Alternative

Target Audience: Those who believe in Sola Scriptura, biblical inerrancy, and biblical infallibility **Framework:** Evidence-based academic argument using credible sources **Purpose:** Demonstrate both the fallibility AND un-infallibility of the Bible while affirming its value and providing LDS alternative

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DEFINING THE TERMS: INERRANCY VS. INFALLIBILITY

What Is Biblical Inerrancy?

Biblical Inerrancy: The doctrine that the Bible, **in its original manuscripts (autographs)**, is **completely without error** in everything it affirms, including: - Theology and doctrine - History and chronology - Geography and places - Science and cosmology - Morality and ethics

Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978): > “Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching... Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.”

Key Claims: - Original autographs contained zero errors - Errors in current Bibles are due to copyist mistakes only - Proper interpretation will resolve all apparent contradictions - The Bible is historically and scientifically accurate

What Is Biblical Infallibility?

Biblical Infallibility: The doctrine that the Bible is **completely trustworthy and reliable** for matters of **faith and practice**, though not necessarily error-free in historical/scientific details.

Key Claims: - The Bible will not fail in its purpose (leading to salvation) - Theological teachings are without error - Historical/scientific details may contain errors but don't affect core truth - The Bible is a **sufficient guide** for Christian life

The Difference:

Concept	Inerrancy	Infallibility
Scope	ALL statements (theology, history, science)	Faith and practice ONLY
Errors?	ZERO errors in originals	Possible peripheral errors
Science	Scientifically accurate	Not primarily a science text
History	Historically precise	Theological history, not journalism
Example	Paul's companions stood (Acts 9) AND fell (Acts 26) = both literally true somehow	Authors emphasized different details for theological purposes

Why This Distinction Matters

Many evangelicals have **retreated from inerrancy to infallibility** as scientific and historical problems mounted. But as we'll show, **both positions are untenable**.

COMMON EVANGELICAL POSITIONS AND REBUTTALS

Position 1: "The Original Autographs Were Inerrant, We Just Don't Have Them"

The Claim: The Bible as originally written by Moses, Paul, etc., was perfect. Errors crept in during copying.

The Problem: This makes inerrancy **unfalsifiable and useless**.

- We only possess fallible copies
- Claiming perfection of non-existent documents is theological speculation
- We can never verify this claim
- If God inspired perfect originals but allowed them to be corrupted, what's the point?
- This is intellectual dishonesty: claiming inerrancy for texts we don't have

Analogy: “My invisible dragon is perfect—you just can’t see him, so you can’t prove he’s imperfect.”

Position 2: “Proper Interpretation Resolves All Contradictions”

The Claim: Apparent contradictions disappear with correct hermeneutics (interpretation methods).

The Problem: This requires: - **Adding details not in the text** (e.g., “both thieves mocked, then one repented later”) - **Redefining words** against scholarly consensus (e.g., “standing” means “had been standing earlier”) - **Invoking rare grammatical rules** that don’t actually exist (e.g., genitive vs. accusative for “hearing”) - **Special pleading** (“it’s literal here, poetic there” with no textual indicators)

The Dishonesty: If the Bible is so clear and inerrant, why does it require such **strained, convoluted** explanations? This makes the Bible seem fragile and unreliable, not inerrant.

Position 3: “These Are Just Minor Copyist Errors, Not Real Errors”

The Claim: Variants are trivial (spelling, word order). Core doctrines remain intact.

The Problem: 1. **Some variants ARE theologically significant:** - Mark 16:9-20 (snake handling, poison drinking) - John 7:53-8:11 (woman in adultery) - 1 John 5:7-8 (Trinity proof text, not in Greek manuscripts)

1. Internal contradictions aren’t copyist errors:

- Did both thieves mock Jesus or only one? (Different authors, not copyists)
- Did Paul’s companions stand or fall? (Different accounts in same book)
- Genesis 1 vs. Genesis 2 creation order (different sources)

2. Even Bart Ehrman (critic of inerrancy) admits core doctrines survive:

- But this proves **fallibility**, not inerrancy
- If textual transmission introduced errors, the Bible is fallible by definition

Position 4: “It’s Inerrant in Its Original Context/Cultural Setting”

The Claim: The Bible is without error **when understood in ancient Near Eastern context.**

The Problem: This is just **infallibility** repackaged, not inerrancy.

- “Inerrant in context” means “reflects ancient worldview accurately”
- But ancient worldview includes flat earth, geocentrism, talking animals
- If the Bible merely reflects human understanding of its era, it’s **NOT** divinely inerrant
- This concedes the Bible is culturally bound = fallible

Position 5: “The Bible Is Inerrant in What It INTENDS to Teach”

The Claim: The Bible is without error in its **purpose and theological message**, not necessarily in every detail.

The Problem: This is literally just **infallibility**, not inerrancy.

- Who decides what the Bible “intends” to teach?
 - Genesis 1 “intends” to teach God created—does it “intend” the order? The timeline?
 - This adds unfalsifiable interpretive layer
 - Inerrancy collapses into infallibility
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THE CASE AGAINST BIBLICAL INERRANCY

1. TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION PROBLEMS

A. Manuscript Variants

Evidence: - 150,000 to 400,000 textual variants exist among New Testament manuscripts - “It would be difficult to find a sentence, even part of a sentence, for which the rendering is consistent in every single manuscript” (Bart Ehrman) - Even conservative scholar Bruce Metzger acknowledged recovering the “original” text involves scholarly **judgment** at numerous points

Implications: The very existence of textual criticism proves we’re uncertain about the original wording.

B. Major Textual Additions Not in Original Manuscripts

Mark 16:9-20 (The Long Ending): - Absent from earliest manuscripts (Codex Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, 4th century) - Contains unique teachings: snake handling, drinking poison - Modern Bibles bracket it or footnote it as later addition - **If inerrant, later scribes wouldn’t have felt free to add entire endings**

John 7:53-8:11 (Woman Caught in Adultery): - Not in earliest Greek manuscripts (P66, P75, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus) - Some manuscripts place it after John 7:36, John 21:25, or in Luke - Not mentioned by early church fathers - **Beautiful story, but NOT originally Scripture**

1 John 5:7-8 (Comma Johanneum - Trinity Proof Text): - “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” - **Not in any Greek manuscript before the 15th century** - Added to Latin Vulgate, translated into KJV - Modern translations omit it - **Strongest “proof text” for Trinity = later fabrication**

Sources: - Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* - Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus* - Wallace, Daniel B., “Textual Problems in the New Testament”

2. INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS

A. The Death of Judas

Matthew 27:5	Acts 1:18
Judas “went and hanged himself”	Judas “purchased a field, and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out”
Chief priests took the money and bought potter’s field	Judas purchased the field himself with his betrayal money
Called “Field of Blood” because bought with blood money	Called “Field of Blood” because Judas died there

Analysis: - Method of death: hanged vs. fell and burst open - Who purchased field: priests vs. Judas - Why called “Field of Blood”: blood money vs. Judas’s blood

Harmonization Attempt: “He hanged himself, then rope broke and he fell and burst open.”

Problem: - Not in either text - Doesn’t explain who purchased field or why it’s called “Field of Blood” - Requires adding speculation

B. Paul’s Conversion: Acts 9, 22, and 26

Element	Acts 9:7	Acts 22:9	Acts 26:14
Companions heard voice	YES (“they heard the sound”)	NO (“did not understand the voice”)	Not stated
Companions saw light	NO (“did not see anyone”)	YES (“saw the light”)	YES (implied)
Companions fell down	NO (“stood speechless”)	Not stated	YES (“we all fell to the ground”)

The “Greek Case” Explanation (Failed Harmonization):

Apologists claim Acts 9:7 uses genitive case (hearing sound) while Acts 22:9 uses accusative (understanding speech).

Why This Fails: - New Testament scholar **Daniel B. Wallace** finds this argument “inconclusive” - Wallace found “more exceptions to the supposed rule than examples of it” - He concludes: “an appeal to different cases probably ought not to form any part of the solution” - F.F. Bruce similarly cautions against this grammatical argument - KJV, Vulgate, and Luther’s translation all preserve the contradiction

Standing vs. Falling: - Acts 9:7: “stood” (ἵστηκεισαν) - Acts 26:14: “we all fell to the ground” (καταπεσόντων) - **These are mutually exclusive**

Sources: - Wallace, Daniel B., Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Bruce, F.F., The Book of Acts (NICNT) - Ehrman, “The Death of Judas in the NT”

C. The Thief/Thieves on the Cross

Gospel	Did BOTH thieves mock Jesus?	Did ONE repent?
Matthew 27:44	YES (“even the robbers...berated Him”)	NO mention
Mark 15:32	YES (“Those crucified with him also reviled him”)	NO mention
Luke 23:39-43	NO (only one mocked)	YES (one defended Jesus, received promise of paradise)
John 19:18	Not addressed	Not addressed

Harmonization Attempt: “Both initially mocked, then one repented.”

Problem: - Not in any gospel - Matthew/Mark use continuous tense (ongoing mockery) - No textual evidence for change of heart

Bart Ehrman’s Analysis: Luke **radically changed Mark’s account** to serve his theological emphasis on Jesus’s mercy.

D. Creation Order Contradictions

Genesis 1 Order: 1. Day 3: Plants/vegetation/trees (Gen 1:11-12) 2. Day 6: Land animals, then humans (male and female together) (Gen 1:24-27)

Genesis 2 Order: 1. **Verse 5:** “No shrub of the field had yet appeared...no plant of the field had yet sprung up...there was no man to work the ground” 2. **Verse 7:** Man (Adam) created first 3. **Verse 8-9:** Garden planted with trees (AFTER man created) 4. **Verse 19:** Animals created (AFTER man, to be helpers) 5. **Verse 22:** Woman created (AFTER animals failed as helpers)

Element	Genesis 1	Genesis 2
Plants/Trees	Day 3 (before humans)	After man created (2:5-9)
Animals	Day 6 (before man)	After man, as potential helpers (2:19)
Humans	Male & female together (1:27)	Man first, then animals, then woman (2:7, 19, 22)

Harmonization Attempts:

1. **“Field plants” vs. “Garden plants”**
 - Problem: Hebrew *sadeh* used for both wild and cultivated areas
 - Genesis 2:9 has God planting trees, not humans cultivating
2. **“Genesis 2 is zoomed-in detail of Day 6”**
 - Problem: Genesis 2:5 explicitly states plants had NOT appeared yet
 - Genesis 2:19 uses *wayyitzer* (sequential “and formed”), not flashback grammar

Scholarly Consensus: These are **two separate creation accounts** from different sources: - **Genesis 1:1-2:4a:** Priestly source (P), 6th-5th century BCE - **Genesis 2:4b-25:** Yahwist source (J), 10th-9th century BCE

Different authors, different theologies, different creation orders.

Sources: - Brown, Raymond E., *An Introduction to the New Testament* - Friedman, Richard Elliott, *Who Wrote the Bible?*

3. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCREPANCIES

A. The Exodus

Biblical Claim: - 600,000 men plus women and children = 2-3 million people (Exodus 12:37) - 40 years in Sinai - 10 plagues devastated Egypt - Egyptian army drowned in Red Sea

Archaeological and Historical Evidence: - **Egyptian records:** Complete silence on Israelite slavery, plagues, or army loss - **Sinai surveys:** No evidence of 40-year occupation by millions - **Scholarly consensus:** “Long gone are the serious scholarly attempts to trace archaeologically the progress of the Exodus” (Finkelstein & Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*)

Moderate Position: Even centrist archaeologist William Dever concludes “the Exodus is a myth or ‘pseudo-history’” though “a group of a few thousand migrants from Egypt probably joined Israel in the 13th century BCE.”

B. The Conquest of Canaan

Biblical Claim: - Swift, violent military conquest - Destruction of Jericho, Ai, Hazor

Archaeological Evidence: - **Jericho:** Destroyed ~1550 BCE, 150 years too early for conquest - **Ai:** Name means “ruin,” site shows no occupation during conquest period - **Pattern:** “Many cities Joshua supposedly destroyed were either already in ruins or unoccupied at the time” (Finkelstein & Silberman)

Archaeology shows **gradual assimilation** from within Canaanite society, not swift conquest.

C. The Census of Quirinius (Luke 2:1-2)

The Problem:

Luke 2:2: Jesus born during census when Quirinius was governor of Syria

Matthew 2:1: Jesus born during Herod’s reign

Historical Evidence: - Herod died 4 BCE - Quirinius became governor 6 CE - Census of Quirinius occurred 6 CE - **10-year chronological gap**

Harmonization Attempts: 1. Quirinius held office twice (no historical evidence) 2. Alternative translation: “before Quirinius was governor” (grammatically unlikely) 3. Multi-phase census (speculative)

Verdict: Most scholars conclude Luke made an error or conflated events.

Source: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 143:3 (2024), “The Census in Luke 2”

4. MORAL DISSONANCE

A. Divine Commands for Genocide

Deuteronomy 20:16-18: > “However, in the cities of the peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, **you shall save alive nothing that breatheth...**”

Deuteronomy 7:1-2: > “When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land... thou shalt smite them, and **utterly destroy them**; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them.”

1 Samuel 15:3: > “Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but **slay both man and woman, infant and suckling**, ox and sheep, camel and ass.”

Philosophical Problem:

Five contradictory premises: 1. God is good 2. The Bible is inerrant 3. Genocide is evil 4. The Bible says God commanded genocide 5. A good being would never command evil

One of these must be false.

Sources: - Morrision, Wesley, “Did God Command Genocide?” - Hofreiter, Christian, “The Dilemma of Genocide in the Old Testament”

B. Biblical Endorsement of Slavery

Exodus 21:20-21: > “If a man smite his servant...with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: **for he is his money.**”

Leviticus 25:44-46: > “Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids...shall be of the heathen...of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids...they shall be **your possession...**they shall be **your bondmen for ever.**”

The Problem: The Bible doesn’t condemn slavery but **regulates** it, treating humans as property that can be bought, sold, inherited, and beaten.

“Cultural Context” Defense: If the Bible merely reflects limited morality of its time, it’s **culturally bound and fallible**, not inerrant.

C. Subordination of Women

1 Timothy 2:11-12: > “Let the woman learn in silence...I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”

1 Corinthians 14:34-35: > “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience.”

Ephesians 5:22-24: > “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord...as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”

The Problem: If inerrant, these are **God’s eternal commands**, not culturally-bound advice. Yet most Christians today reject them as culturally limited.

THE CASE AGAINST BIBLICAL INFALLIBILITY

Infallibility claims the Bible is **trustworthy for faith and practice** even if not historically/scientifically perfect. But this position also fails.

1. The Bible Contradicts Itself on Core Theological Matters

A. Salvation: Faith Alone or Faith + Works?

Paul (Faith Alone): - **Romans 3:28** – “A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” - **Galatians 2:16** – “A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ” - **Ephesians 2:8-9** – “For by grace are ye saved through faith...not of works”

James (Faith + Works): - **James 2:24** – “Ye see then how that **by works a man is justified, and not by faith only**” - **James 2:26** – “For as the body without the spirit is dead, **so faith without works is dead also**”

The Problem: These are **core doctrinal teachings** about salvation—the central issue of Christian theology. If the Bible is infallible for “faith and practice,” it shouldn’t contradict itself on HOW TO BE SAVED.

Harmonization Attempt: “James means ‘living faith’ produces works; Paul means works don’t earn salvation.”

Counter: James 2:24 explicitly says “**not by faith only**”—this directly contradicts Reformation *sola fide*.

B. Can Humans See God?

Yes, Humans Have Seen God: - **Genesis 32:30** – Jacob: “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” - **Exodus 24:9-11** – “Then went up Moses, and Aaron...and they **saw the God of Israel**...they saw God, and did eat and drink” -

Exodus 33:11 – “The LORD spake unto Moses **face to face**, as a man speaketh unto his friend” - **Isaiah 6:1** – “I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne” - **John 14:9** – Jesus: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”

No, Humans Cannot See God: - **Exodus 33:20** – “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall **no man see me, and live**” - **John 1:18** – “**No man hath seen God at any time**” - **1 Timothy 6:16** – God “**whom no man hath seen, nor can see**” - **1 John 4:12** – “**No man hath seen God at any time**”

The Problem: This isn't peripheral—it's about God's **nature and accessibility**, central to theology.

Harmonization Attempt: “Saw God's form/manifestation/glory, not His essence.”

Counter: - Genesis 32:30 says “face to face” - Exodus 33:11 says “face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” - The text doesn't say “manifestation”—it says “God”

LDS Solution: JST corrects Exodus 33:20: “**No sinful man** hath at any time...see my face and live.” Adds moral qualifier, not absolute prohibition.

C. Does God Change His Mind?

Yes, God Changes His Mind: - **Exodus 32:14** – “The LORD **repented of the evil** which he thought to do unto his people” - **1 Samuel 15:11** – “It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king” - **Jonah 3:10** – “God **saw their works...and God repented of the evil**, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not”

No, God Never Changes: - **Numbers 23:19** – “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should **repent**” - **1 Samuel 15:29** – “The Strength of Israel will not lie nor **repent**: for he is not a man, that he should repent” - **Malachi 3:6** – “For I am the LORD, **I change not**” - **James 1:17** – God “with whom is **no variableness, neither shadow of turning**”

The Problem: Even 1 Samuel 15 **contradicts itself:** - Verse 11: God repents of making Saul king - Verse 29: God does not repent

In the same chapter.

2. The Bible Teaches Morally Reprehensible Positions

If the Bible is infallible for “faith and practice,” its moral teachings should be trustworthy. But:

A. Biblical “Solutions” We Reject Today

Rape victims must marry rapist: - **Deuteronomy 22:28-29** – “If a man find a damsel...and lie with her...the man...shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife”

Rebellious children should be stoned: - **Deuteronomy 21:18-21** – “If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son...all the men of his city shall **stone him with stones, that he die**”

Sabbath-breaking = death penalty: - **Exodus 35:2** – “Whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death” - **Numbers 15:32-36** – Man gathering sticks on Sabbath was stoned to death by God’s command

Women are property: - **Exodus 20:17** – “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house...nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass” (wife listed with property)

B. The “Cultural Context” Defense Undermines Infallibility

The Argument: “These commands reflected their cultural context, not God’s eternal will.”

The Problem: If the Bible’s moral teachings are **culturally bound** and can be **overridden** by modern ethics, then:

1. The Bible is **not infallible** for moral practice
2. We’re using **extra-biblical ethics** to judge the Bible
3. **We** become the authority, not Scripture

This destroys Sola Scriptura and biblical infallibility.

3. Scripture Alone Is Explicitly Condemned BY Scripture

2 Peter 1:20: > “Knowing this first, that **no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.**”

2 Peter 3:16: > “As also in all [Paul’s] epistles...in which are some things hard to be understood, which **they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.**”

The Problem: Scripture itself says: 1. Scripture should NOT be privately interpreted (requires authority outside the text) 2. Untaught people **misinterpret Scripture to their destruction**

This means Scripture alone is INSUFFICIENT and even DANGEROUS without proper authority.

The Protestant Dilemma

Protestant Claim: Scripture alone (*Sola Scriptura*) is sufficient authority

Scripture’s Own Claim: Scripture requires **authoritative interpretation**

Evidence: - 45,000+ Protestant denominations - All claim to follow “Scripture alone” - All have different interpretations - Unity is impossible without authoritative interpreter

The Catholic/Orthodox Response: Church authority + Tradition + Scripture

The LDS Response: Living prophets + Continuing revelation + Holy Spirit confirmation

IF YOU REALLY BELIEVED THE BIBLE IS INERRANT, YOU WOULD HAVE TO BELIEVE...

1. The Earth Is Flat and Covered by a Solid Dome

The Firmament (Solid Sky Dome)

Genesis 1:6-8: > “And God said, Let there be a **firmament** in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters...And God called the firmament Heaven.”

Hebrew: *raqia* (רָקִיעַ) - Root: *raqa* = “to beat out, stamp out, hammer” (as in hammering metal into thin plates) - **Scholarly consensus:** Refers to solid dome/vault

Genesis 1:17: God “set” the sun, moon, and stars “**IN the firmament**” (embedded in the dome)

Genesis 7:11 & 8:2: The “**windows/floodgates of heaven**” opened to release waters above during flood

BioLogos (Christian science organization): > “Biblical scholars agree on this understanding of *raqia*, and the biblical and extrabiblical data indicate that *raqia* means a solid structure”

Earth’s Foundations and Pillars

Job 38:4-6: > “Where were you when I **laid the foundations of the earth?**...On what were **its bases sunk**, or who laid its **cornerstone?**”

1 Samuel 2:8: > “For **the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s**, and on them he has set the world.”

Psalms 104:5: > “He set the earth **on its foundations**; it can never be moved.”

Psalms 75:3: > “When the earth and all its people quake, it is **I who hold its pillars firm.**”

Other foundation references: Psalm 18:15, 82:5, Proverbs 8:29, Isaiah 24:18, Jeremiah 31:37, Micah 6:2

Four Corners of the Earth

Revelation 7:1: > “After this I saw **four angels standing at the four corners of the earth**”

Isaiah 11:12: > “He will...gather the exiles of Israel...from **the four corners of the earth**”

Hebrew: *kanaph* = extremity, edge, corner **Greek:** *gonia* = angle, corner

Other references: Ezekiel 7:2, Isaiah 41:9, Jeremiah 49:36

High Mountain Seeing All Kingdoms

Matthew 4:8: > “The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world”

Daniel 4:10-11: > “A tree in the midst of the earth...its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth”

Problem: On spherical earth, no mountain/tree height allows viewing all kingdoms due to curvature.

The Circle (Not Sphere) of Earth

Isaiah 40:22: > “It is he who sits above the circle of the earth”

Hebrew: *chug* (חוג) = circle, compass, vault

Key: Hebrew has word for sphere/ball (*dur*, used in Isaiah 22:18), but *chug* = flat circle, not sphere.

2. The Universe Is Only 6,000-10,000 Years Old

Bishop Ussher’s Chronology (1650): Creation occurred **October 23, 4004 BCE** by adding up Genesis genealogies.

Problems:

Textual Variations: - Hebrew Masoretic vs. Greek Septuagint differ by ~1,500 years

Gaps in Genealogies: - **Matthew 1:8** skips three generations (Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah) - **Luke 3:36** includes Cainan, missing from Genesis 11:12 - Hebrew *yālad* (“fathered”) doesn’t require immediate succession

Historical Conflicts: - Egyptian civilization dates to ~3,100 BCE (1,000 years BEFORE Ussher’s flood) - Chinese, Sumerian records show continuous habitation through supposed flood period

Scientific Contradictions: - **Geology:** Rock layers, radiometric dating, continental drift - **Astronomy:** Light from galaxies billions of light-years away - **Biology:** Fossil record, genetic diversity - **Physics:** Radioactive decay, tree rings going back 13,000+ years

3. A Global Flood Covered Earth ~4,400 Years Ago

The Claims: - **Genesis 7:19-20:** “All the high mountains...were covered...to a depth of more than twenty feet” - All land animals except ark animals died - Only 8 humans survived

Geological Problems:

No Evidence: - No global flood layer in geological column - Continuous sedimentary layers show no worldwide disruption - Ice cores show continuous layers back 800,000+ years - Coral reefs show continuous growth for thousands of years

Water Volume: - Mount Everest: 29,000+ feet - Covering it requires ~4.5 billion cubic kilometers of water - Earth's total water: ~1.4 billion cubic kilometers - **Not enough water exists** (need 3x more)

Salt Water Problem: - Mixing all ocean + fresh water creates brackish water - Kills both saltwater and freshwater fish - Bible says only land animals needed ark

Biological Problems:

Biodiversity Impossibility: - ~1.7 million described species today - If only ark animals survived 4,400 years ago, speciation rate required: **~400 new species PER DAY**

The Kangaroo Problem: - Kangaroo fossils found ONLY in Australia, dating back 50,000+ years - If kangaroos got off ark in Middle East, why: - No kangaroo fossils between Middle East and Australia? - Found ONLY in Australia? - How did joeys survive 8,000+ mile journey?

Same problem: Lemurs (Madagascar), sloths (South America), polar bears (Arctic)

The Koala Problem: - Koalas eat ONLY eucalyptus leaves (toxic to other animals) - Eucalyptus grows ONLY in Australia - How did koalas survive one year on ark? Journey to/from?

Genetic Bottleneck: - Global extinction 4,400 years ago would show severe genetic bottleneck - **No such bottleneck exists** in human or animal genetics from that period - Human genetic diversity requires population never dropped below ~10,000

4. Animals Can Talk (Literally)

Numbers 22:28-30 – Balaam's Donkey: > “Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, ‘What have I done to you?’”

Genesis 3:1-5 – The Serpent: > “Now the serpent was more crafty...He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say...?’”

Implications: - Donkeys/serpents have vocal cords for human speech (they don't) - They have linguistic cognition (they don't) - Balaam shows no surprise (argues with donkey like it's normal)

5. Pi = 3 (Not 3.14159...)

1 Kings 7:23: > “He made the sea of cast metal, **circular in form**, measuring **ten cubits from rim to rim**...It took a line **thirty cubits long** to measure around it”

The Math: - Diameter = 10 cubits - Circumference = 30 cubits - $\text{Pi} = C \div d = 30 \div 10 = 3.0$ - Actual value: **3.14159...** - **Error: ~4.5%**

6. Rabbits Chew Cud

Leviticus 11:6: > “The rabbit, though it **chews the cud**, does not have a divided hoof”

Scientific Fact: - Rabbits do NOT chew cud - **Cud-chewing (rumination):** Ruminants (cattle, sheep) regurgitate partially digested food, have 4 stomachs - **Rabbits:** Single-chambered stomach, practice **refection** (eating own feces to re-digest)

Hebrew: *alah gerah* = “bring up cud” (regurgitation)

Problem: Rock hyrax (also listed, Lev 11:5) neither ruminates NOR practices refection

7. Insects Have Four Legs

Leviticus 11:20-23: > “All flying insects that **walk on all fours** are to be detestable to you”

Scientific Fact: Insects have **six legs**, not four.

8. Bats Are Birds

Leviticus 11:13-19: Lists bats among “birds” (Hebrew: *oph* = flying creatures)

Scientific Fact: Bats are **mammals**, not birds.

9. Snakes Eat Dust

Genesis 3:14: > “You will crawl on your belly and you will **eat dust** all the days of your life”

Scientific Fact: Snakes are **carnivores**, not dust-eaters.

10. The Sun Revolves Around Earth (Geocentrism)

Joshua 10:12-13: > “Sun, **stand still** over Gibeon...So the **sun stood still**...The sun **stopped** in the middle of the sky”

Implications: - Sun moves around earth (geocentrism) - If literal, stopping earth’s rotation would cause: - Everything flying eastward at ~1,000 mph (inertial catastrophe) - Tidal disruptions - Orbital mechanics collapse

11. Stars Are Small and Can Fall to Earth

Revelation 6:13: > “And the **stars in the sky fell to earth**, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind”

Scientific Fact: - Stars are massive (our sun is 1.3 million times Earth's volume) - Even one star "falling" would vaporize Earth - Reflects ancient cosmology: stars = small lights embedded in firmament

12. Mustard Seeds Are Smallest Seeds

Matthew 13:31-32: > "The kingdom of heaven is like a **mustard seed**, which is **the smallest of all seeds on earth**"

Botanical Fact: - Mustard seeds are NOT smallest (orchid seeds smaller, plus many others) - Mustard plants are NOT "largest of all garden plants" (they're shrubs, 6-20 feet)

13. God of Israel Loses a Battle to Chemosh, God of Moab

2 Kings 3:27: > "Then he [King Mesha] took his oldest son...and offered him for a burnt offering on the wall. And there came **great wrath against Israel**. And **they withdrew from him** and returned to their own land"

Context: - Elisha prophesied complete victory for Israel over Moab (2 Kings 3:18-19) - Israel was winning decisively (2 Kings 3:24-25) - King Mesha sacrificed his son to Chemosh (Moabite god) - "**Great wrath**" (**Hebrew: qetsef**) **fell on Israel** (this word almost exclusively means divine wrath from a deity in Hebrew Bible) - **Israel retreated without completing victory**

Implications: 1. Elisha's prophecy **failed** 2. A foreign deity (**Chemosh**) successfully intervened against Yahweh's people 3. Child sacrifice to Chemosh was **effective** 4. **Henotheism** (multiple real gods) is assumed

Archaeological Confirmation: The **Mesha Stele** (Moabite Stone, ~840 BCE, in Louvre Museum) corroborates this event from Moab's perspective: - "Chemosh was angry with his land" - "Chemosh drove [the king of Israel] out before me"

Why This Challenges Inerrancy: If the Bible is inerrant, you must believe **Chemosh is a real deity who defeated Yahweh's army.**

14. Morally Abhorrent Practices Are God's Will

Slavery is permissible: - Leviticus 25:44-46, Exodus 21:20-21

Beating slaves is acceptable: - Exodus 21:20-21 (if they survive 1-2 days)

Genocide is sometimes commanded: - 1 Samuel 15:3, Deuteronomy 20:16-17

Rape victims must marry rapists: - Deuteronomy 22:28-29

Rebellious children should be stoned: - Deuteronomy 21:18-21

Women are property: - Exodus 20:17 (wife listed with house, servants, livestock)

THE LDS POSITION: WHAT AUTHORITY INSTEAD OF TEXT ALONE?

The Problem with “Scripture Alone”

2 Peter 1:20: “No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation”

Evidence Scripture Alone Doesn’t Work: - 45,000+ Protestant denominations - All claim “Scripture alone” - All have different interpretations - On salvation, baptism, communion, church government, end times, etc.

The Question: If Scripture is so clear, why such chaos?

Answer: Scripture requires **authoritative interpretation.**

The LDS Three-Fold Authority Structure

The LDS Church offers a coherent alternative to “Scripture alone”:

1. LIVING PROPHETS WITH CONTINUING REVELATION

The Principle:

Amos 3:7: > “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets”

LDS Position: - God spoke through prophets anciently (Moses, Isaiah, Peter) - God STILL speaks through prophets today (President of the Church) - The canon is NOT closed - New revelation addresses modern issues the Bible doesn’t cover

Why This Is Necessary:

If the Bible were complete and infallible: - Continuing revelation would be unnecessary - It would even be blasphemous (per Revelation 22:18-19)

The Bible’s incompleteness and fallibility REQUIRE ongoing revelation.

D&C 1:37-38: > “Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled. What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, **my word shall not pass away**, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by **mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.**”

Modern prophets speak with God’s authority.

2. ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE TO SUPPLEMENT THE BIBLE

The Book of Mormon: > “Another Testament of Jesus Christ”

Purpose: - Provides second witness (2 Corinthians 13:1) - Clarifies biblical doctrines - Restores “plain and precious truths” removed from Bible (1 Nephi 13:26-29)

Example: - Bible uses “atonement” once in NT (Romans 5:11 KJV) - Book of Mormon uses forms of “atonement” 35 times with detailed theology

Doctrine and Covenants: - Modern revelations received by Joseph Smith and successors - Addresses issues Bible doesn’t cover (baptism for dead, three degrees of glory, priesthood organization, etc.)

Joseph Smith Translation (JST): - Thousands of corrections to KJV through revelation - Example: Exodus 33:20 - **KJV:** “No man shall see me and live” - **JST:** “No **sinful** man...at **this time**...shall see my face and live” - Resolves contradiction with passages where people DO see God

The Hierarchy: When scriptures conflict: 1. Modern revelation (most current) 2. Book of Mormon (textually purest) 3. JST corrections 4. Bible “as far as it is translated correctly”

3. HOLY SPIRIT CONFIRMATION (PERSONAL REVELATION)

The Principle:

Moroni 10:4-5: > “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would **ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true**; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, **he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost**. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye **may know the truth of all things.**”

The Process: 1. Study the scriptures (Bible, Book of Mormon, D&C, Pearl of Great Price) 2. Ponder and pray 3. Seek Holy Spirit confirmation 4. Receive personal witness

Why This Matters: - No one can argue with your personal spiritual experience - External evidence supports, but **testimony** comes from Holy Spirit - This is how you know truth—not just by intellectual argument

The LDS Epistemology:

Source	Function
Living Prophets	Authoritative interpretation and new revelation
Additional Scripture	Clarifies, supplements, corrects Bible
Holy Spirit	Personal confirmation of truth
Bible	Foundation, valuable witness of Christ
Reason/Scholarship	Helps understand context, identify errors

All five work together.

Why “No Scripture Is for Private Interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20)

Protestant Problem: Everyone interprets for themselves → 45,000 denominations

Catholic/Orthodox Solution: Church Magisterium interprets authoritatively

LDS Solution: Living prophets provide authoritative interpretation + personal Holy Spirit confirmation

Example:

Question: Does baptism save? (Mark 16:16 vs. Ephesians 2:8-9 seem to conflict)

Protestant approach: Argue over Greek, context, theology → no consensus

LDS approach: 1. **Living prophet** teaches: Baptism is essential ordinance but doesn't "save" independent of faith/repentance/endurance 2. **Additional scripture** clarifies: 2 Nephi 31, 3 Nephi 11, D&C 20 provide detailed baptism theology 3. **Holy Spirit** confirms truth to individual

Result: Unity on doctrine across global church

The Eighth Article of Faith: Biblical Fallibility Built into LDS Theology

“We believe the Bible to be the word of God **as far as it is translated correctly**; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.”

Meaning: - “Translated correctly” = entire transmission process (copyist errors, editorial changes, removed doctrines) - Fallibility is **expected** and **accounted for** - This isn't a weakness—it's **theological honesty**

Implications: 1. Acknowledges reality of textual corruption 2. Explains why contradictions exist 3. Justifies need for additional revelation 4. Allows use of Bible without defending every detail 5. Makes restoration necessary

1 Nephi 13:26-29 (Prophecy of Biblical Corruption): > “And after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb...thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church, which...hath **taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious**; and also **many covenants of the Lord have they taken away**”

Lost Truths (according to LDS theology): - Nature of Godhead (God the Father has body) - Pre-mortal existence - Eternal progression and deification - Baptism for the dead - Three degrees of glory - Priesthood organization - Temple ordinances

The LDS Framework: Because the Bible is fallible and incomplete, God provided: 1. Restoration through Joseph Smith 2. Book of Mormon (second witness) 3. Modern revelation (D&C) 4. Living prophets 5. Holy Spirit confirmation

WHY THE BIBLE IS STILL RELIABLE AND VALUABLE

Critical Distinction: Fallible ≠ Unreliable

The LDS position affirms the Bible remains profoundly valuable despite imperfections:

1. THE BIBLE TESTIFIES OF JESUS CHRIST

Primary Purpose: > “The Scriptures Teach and Testify of Jesus Christ” (*Ensign*, January 2011)

Core Message Intact: - Prophecies of Christ - His ministry, crucifixion, resurrection - Plan of salvation through Jesus

Even Bart Ehrman (critic) admits: > “Essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition”

LDS Affirmation: Bible and Book of Mormon together establish Christ’s divinity and mission.

2. HISTORICAL FOUNDATION (Partially Verified)

Verified Elements: - Existence of ancient Israel (Merneptah Stele, 1208 BCE) - David’s kingdom (Tel Dan Stele: “House of David”) - Babylonian captivity (extensively documented) - NT figures/places (Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod’s temple)

William Dever (Archaeologist) affirms: - “Proto-Israel” in Palestine (Merneptah stele) - “Israelite statehood during tenth century BC” (Tel Dan stele) - “Expanding state during mid-tenth century (age of Solomon)”

Unverified/Contradicted Elements: - Exodus (no Egyptian records, no Sinai evidence) - Conquest (archaeological evidence shows gradual assimilation) - Global flood (no geological evidence)

LDS Position: Bible contains historical core mixed with: - Theological interpretation - Editorial embellishment - Legendary accretion - Textual corruption

Use discernment, scholarship, and modern revelation to navigate.

3. MORAL AND DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES

Enduring Moral Teaching: - Ten Commandments - Prophetic calls for justice (Micah 6:8, Isaiah 1:17) - Jesus’s teachings (Sermon on Mount, parables, two great commandments) - Paul’s teachings on faith, hope, charity (1 Corinthians 13)

Progressive Revelation: > “Line upon line, precept upon precept” (Isaiah 28:10, 2 Nephi 28:30)

The Bible represents an earlier stage of revelation that established essential truths later revelation builds upon.

4. THE BOOK OF MORMON CONFIRMS THE BIBLE’S VALUE

1 Nephi 13:39-40: > “And after it had come forth unto them I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb...unto the **convincing of the Gentiles...that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true**”

Purpose of Book of Mormon: Not to replace but to **confirm** the Bible: - “For the intent that ye may believe’ the Bible, not to destroy it ‘but to build it up’” - Provides second witness - Clarifies biblical teachings - Proves “to the world that the holy scriptures [Bible] are true”

5. PRACTICAL RELIABILITY: THE BIBLE WORKS

Lived Experience: Millions of Christians (including Latter-day Saints) have found:
- Spiritual guidance and comfort - Moral direction - Inspiration for faith and hope - Personal transformation

LDS Use of Bible: - One of Four Standard Works - Studied in Sunday School, Seminary - Quoted in General Conference - Foundation for temple ordinances - Used extensively in missionary work

The Bible’s practical reliability—its ability to bring people to Christ—demonstrates its divine origin despite textual imperfections.

CONCLUSION: A MORE HONEST THEOLOGY

The Paradox of Defending Inerrancy

Those who defend biblical inerrancy most vigorously often end up trusting it least:

They must: - Explain away contradictions - Harmonize irreconcilable accounts - Defend indefensible moral positions (genocide, slavery) - Ignore scholarly consensus - Treat Bible as fragile, requiring constant apologetic defense - Add details not in text - Perform interpretive gymnastics

This makes the Bible seem unreliable and fragile.

The LDS Approach: Trust Through Honesty

By acknowledging fallibility, Latter-day Saints actually trust the Bible more freely:

- No need to defend every detail
- Freedom to recognize cultural/historical context
- Confidence in core message despite textual issues
- Ability to use reason, scholarship, AND additional revelation together
- Treating Bible as robust scripture that withstands honest examination

For the Sola Scriptura Audience: Consider the Evidence

1. Textual Evidence Is Overwhelming

Hundreds of thousands of variants, significant later additions (Mark 16:9-20, John 7:53-8:11, 1 John 5:7-8), admitted scholarly uncertainty about original readings.

2. Internal Contradictions Are Real

Judas's death, Paul's conversion, thieves on cross, creation order, who can see God, does God change His mind—these genuinely conflict.

3. Archaeological Silence Is Deafening

Exodus, Conquest, and other major narratives lack external confirmation and often conflict with established evidence.

4. Moral Problems Cannot Be Ignored

Divine commands for genocide, regulation of slavery, subordination of women reflect culturally-bound morality, not perfect divine law.

5. Even Conservative Scholars Acknowledge Problems

Bruce Metzger, Raymond Brown, William Dever, F.F. Bruce, Daniel Wallace—none are radical skeptics, yet all acknowledge significant challenges to strict inerrancy.

The Question: Can you maintain intellectual honesty while clinging to inerrancy/infallibility in the face of this evidence?

The LDS Alternative: A Theologically Coherent Position

1. Acknowledge Fallibility The Bible contains errors of transmission, contradictions, and culturally-bound limitations.

2. Affirm Divine Origin Despite imperfections, the Bible is God's word, containing essential truths about Christ and salvation.

3. Embrace Restoration Because the Bible is incomplete and imperfect, God provided: - Book of Mormon (another witness, greater textual purity) - Modern revelation (D&C, living prophets) - Joseph Smith Translation (divine corrections)

4. Live by Continuing Revelation The canon is not closed. God speaks today through prophets.

5. Use the Bible Wisely Study it alongside other scripture, compare with Book of Mormon clarifications, seek Holy Spirit confirmation.

Why This Matters

For the Sincere Seeker:

Intellectual honesty demands acknowledging biblical fallibility. The evidence is too substantial to ignore.

Yet fallibility doesn't equal worthlessness. The Bible remains: - Powerful witness of Jesus Christ - Source of prophetic wisdom - Foundation for moral/spiritual life - Historical record of God's dealings with His people

The LDS Framework Offers: - **Theological coherence** (explaining why problems exist) - **Practical solutions** (additional scripture, living prophets) - **Spiritual confidence** (not dependent on inerrancy) - **Intellectual integrity** (no need to defend the indefensible)

The Invitation

Instead of defending an untenable position (inerrancy/infallibility), embrace a more robust theology:

1. **Honor** the Bible's divine inspiration
2. **Acknowledge** its human transmission and limitations
3. **Supplement** its incompleteness with modern revelation
4. **Rely** on Holy Spirit for personal confirmation
5. **Follow** living prophets receiving continuing revelation

This position maintains reverence for Scripture while avoiding intellectual contortions required to defend inerrancy/infallibility.

THE TESTIMONY

“We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.”

—Article of Faith 8

This is not weakness but **strength**—honest acknowledgment of reality while maintaining faith in God's ability to communicate truth through imperfect human instruments.

The Bible is fallible. The Bible is not infallible. And that's okay. Because God is not.

God works through imperfect people, imperfect texts, and imperfect transmission—but His truth endures.

The LDS restoration provides what biblical inerrancy/infallibility cannot: - **Honesty** about textual problems - **Solutions** through additional revelation - **Authority** through living prophets - **Confirmation** through Holy Spirit - **Unity** in doctrine despite biblical ambiguities

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Document Created: December 5, 2025 **Research Method:** Comprehensive scholarly sources, textual criticism, archaeological findings, philosophical theology, LDS official publications **Target Audience:** Sola Scriptura believers, biblical inerrancy/infallibility proponents **Purpose:** Present evidence-based argument for biblical fallibility AND un-infallibility while demonstrating LDS theological framework for maintaining biblical reliability and value