

# Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 18, Infallibility and Inerrancy, Results Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 18, Infallibility and Inerrancy, Results, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This excerpt from a lecture by Dr. Robert A. Peterson explores the doctrine of Scripture as God's inspired Word, emphasizing its **authority** and **inerrancy**. Peterson argues that because Scripture originates from God, it inherently possesses the right to teach truth and command obedience. He further explains that **inerrancy** means the original writings of Scripture are completely truthful in all they affirm, even while acknowledging the human element in its authorship, encompassing diverse literary styles and purposes. The lecture also introduces Kevin Vanhoozer's concept of **infallibility** as a broader term than inerrancy, suggesting that while Scripture is always truthful, it also unfailingly accomplishes God's diverse purposes through its various genres.

**2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 18 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Revelation & Scripture).**



**Peterson\_Rev\_Sessi  
on18.mp3**

### **3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 18, Infallibility and Inerrancy, Results**

**Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on Revelation and Scripture, Session 18**

#### **Overview:**

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and arguments presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 18 of his teaching on Revelation and Holy Scripture, focusing on the results of inspiration and the distinction between inerrancy and infallibility. Peterson argues that Scripture, as special revelation, is God's Word, possessing authority and inerrancy. He then explores the concept of infallibility, drawing on Kevin Vanhoozer's perspective to suggest it is a broader category encompassing the various purposes and effects of God's inerrant Word.

#### **Main Themes and Important Ideas:**

##### **1. Scripture as God's Word:**

- Peterson asserts that Scripture is God's Word for four primary reasons:
- It is routinely called that in the Bible itself ("the sacred writings").
- God directed the writers, making the scriptures inspired by Him.
- Scripture bears God's characteristics and performs key functions for Him.
- Jesus and the apostles attribute Old Testament statements to God, even when the original attribution was different, indicating that "when the scripture speaks, God speaks or the Holy Spirit speaks."
- He emphasizes the dual nature of Scripture as both God's Word and a human book, given through human authors, in human language, to human beings for the purpose of knowing and loving God.
- The Bible's diversity in authorship, time, genres, and topics (listing numerous examples like "poetry and prose, narrative and discourse, oracle and lament") is acknowledged, yet its "amazing unity of message" is highlighted due to its divine inspiration.

##### **2. Scripture as Authoritative:**

- Because God is the source of Scripture, it inherently possesses His authority, defined as "the right to teach truth and command obedience."

- Quoting Conrad Mubewe of Zambia, Peterson underscores the need for reverence and submission to God's Word: "As we read then, we are to sit under the Word of God, not stand over it. We must receive with meekness the implanted Word..."
- He cites Psalm 19 and 2 Timothy 3:16 to illustrate the purposes and authoritative nature of Scripture for teaching, rebuke, correction, and training in righteousness.
- Rejecting biblical authority leads to creating one's own beliefs and rules for living, essentially one's "own religion."
- Peterson stresses the importance of being humble listeners of Scripture, not critics or editors, and that we must respect, believe, and obey it, even when it contradicts our desires.

### 3. Scripture as Inerrant:

- Inerrancy stems from the divine inspiration of Scripture. Drawing from 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16, Peterson explains that God directed human authors through the Holy Spirit, resulting in Scripture that is "truthful in all that it affirms."
- He highlights the dynamic, verbal, and plenary nature of inspiration: God works through active human authors, inspiring the actual writings and words, and all of Scripture, not just parts.
- Quoting D.A. Carson, inspiration is "the supernatural work of God's Holy Spirit upon the human authors of Scripture, such that what they wrote was precisely what God intended them to write in order to communicate His truth."
- Inerrancy applies to the "autographs," the original texts, and textual criticism is valued because it is undergirded by the belief in an inerrant original.
- Peterson introduces the **Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy**, emphasizing its aim to produce an agreement among evangelicals. Key points from the short statement include:
  - Holy Scripture is "of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches."
  - It is "without error or fault in all its teaching."
  - Limiting or disregarding this "total divine inerrancy" impairs the authority of Scripture.

- He reviews several Articles of Affirmation and Denial from the Chicago Statement, highlighting key points such as:
- Scripture's supreme authority over the church and tradition (Article 2).
- Plenary inspiration (Article 3).
- God's use of human language as a vehicle for revelation (Article 4).
- Progressive revelation that does not contradict earlier revelation (Article 5).
- Inspiration extending to the very words of the original text (Article 6).
- God's utilization of the writers' personalities (Article 8).
- Inspiration granting true and trustworthy utterances on all matters addressed (Article 9).
- Inerrancy applying strictly to the autographs (Article 10).
- The unity and internal consistency of Scripture (Article 14).
- The grounding of inerrancy in the Bible's teaching about inspiration (Article 15).
- The historical integral nature of inerrancy to the church's faith (Article 16).
- The role of grammatico-historical exegesis (Article 18).
- The vital importance of confessing the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture (Article 19), while acknowledging it is not necessary for salvation but its rejection has grave consequences.
- Peterson acknowledges the qualifications within the Chicago Statement, aimed at listening to the Bible itself and addressing potential misunderstandings of inerrancy.

#### **4. Distinction between Inerrancy and Infallibility:**

- Historically, "infallible" was used synonymously with "inerrant," both meaning incapable of error or truthful/reliable.
- Drawing on Kevin Vanhoozer's proposal, Peterson suggests a broader definition of infallibility where "inerrancy is a subset of infallibility."
- While affirming the full inerrancy of the Bible in all its genres (insofar as it relates to truth and error), Vanhoozer argues that Scripture's purpose extends beyond merely communicating truth.

- Infallibility, according to this view, encompasses the idea that "God's word by means of its different genres accomplishes many things unfailingly."
- Examples are given: parables aim to impart wisdom, warnings are more than just truthful statements, and passages offering hope energize.
- Isaiah 55:10-11 is cited to illustrate how God's Word accomplishes His purposes beyond just teaching truth.
- Romans 1:16 and 10:17, and Hebrews 4:12-13 are used to show the power and active nature of God's Word, extending beyond mere factual accuracy.
- Peterson emphasizes that Vanhoozer's proposal does not undermine inerrancy but rather recognizes the broader "elocutionary forces that God unleashes in the giving of his inerrant and holy word."

## 5. The Biblical Canon:

- While not extensively covered, Peterson briefly touches upon the canon, citing David G. Dunbar's view that the church *recognized* rather than *established* the authoritative books of the Bible, aligning with Irenaeus's teaching.
- The canon is considered not only apostolic but fundamentally Christological or redemptive-historical, with Jesus's words and deeds interpreted by the apostles forming the standard.
- Apostolicity was the qualifying factor for recognition, considering content and chronology, and God's providential control over this process is acknowledged.

## Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson's Session 18 provides a detailed overview of the doctrine of Scripture, emphasizing its divine origin, authority, and inerrancy. He then introduces a nuanced understanding of infallibility as a broader concept that acknowledges the multifaceted purposes and powerful effects of God's inerrant Word through its various literary genres. The discussion is grounded in biblical texts and key theological statements like the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, highlighting the importance of a high view of Scripture for Christian faith and practice.

## 4. Study Guide: Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 18, Infallibility and Inerrancy, Results

### Study Guide: Scripture, Inspiration, Inerrancy, and Infallibility

#### Key Concepts:

- **Scripture as God's Word:** Reasons for affirming the Bible's divine origin.
- **Simultaneous Human and Divine Authorship:** Understanding the dual nature of Scripture.
- **Authority of Scripture:** The right to teach truth and command obedience.
- **Inspiration:** God's supernatural work on human authors to produce His intended writings.
- **Verbal Inspiration:** The inspiration extends to the very words of Scripture.
- **Plenary Inspiration:** All of Scripture is fully inspired by God.
- **Inerrancy:** Scripture is truthful in all that it affirms, referring specifically to the original autographs.
- **Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy:** A key document defining and defending inerrancy.
- **Infallibility:** Scripture is incapable of error and reliably accomplishes God's purposes through its various genres.
- **Canon of Scripture:** The collection of authoritative books recognized by the church.
- **Hermeneutics:** The principles of interpreting Scripture, including the analogy of faith.

#### Quiz:

1. What are two of the four reasons Dr. Peterson provides for affirming that Scripture is God's Word?
2. Explain the concept of the Bible as simultaneously a human and divine book. What are some implications of its human aspect for interpretation?
3. According to the lecture, what does the authority of Scripture mean? How does it impact our approach to the Bible?

4. Briefly describe the process of inspiration as presented in the lecture, highlighting the role of both God and human authors.
5. What is the significance of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy? What was one of its primary goals?
6. According to the Chicago Statement, to what does inerrancy specifically apply? What about copies and translations?
7. What is the relationship between inerrancy and infallibility as proposed by Kevin Van Hooser in the lecture?
8. Explain Van Hooser's reasoning for suggesting that infallibility is a broader category than inerrancy. Provide an example.
9. How does the concept of inerrancy inform the task of exegesis (interpreting Scripture)?
10. According to the lecture, did the church establish or recognize the canon of Scripture? What was considered a qualifying factor for canonical recognition?

**Answer Key:**

1. Two reasons for affirming Scripture as God's Word are that it is routinely called that in the Bible itself and that Jesus and the apostles attribute Old Testament statements to God that were not originally attributed to Him. Additionally, Scripture bears characteristics of God and performs key functions for God, and God directed the writers so that the scriptures were inspired by Him.
2. The Bible is simultaneously a human and divine book because God gave us Scripture through human authors, in human language, for human beings. The human aspect, including diverse authors, literary genres, and historical contexts, affects how we interpret it, requiring us to consider these factors for correct understanding.
3. The authority of Scripture means it has the right to teach God's truth and command obedience. This implies that when reading Scripture, we should humbly submit to its teachings, even when they contradict our own desires, recognizing it as the ultimate authority over our beliefs and behavior.
4. Inspiration is the supernatural work of God's Holy Spirit on human authors, directing them to write precisely what God intended to communicate His truth. This process is described as dynamic, verbal (extending to the words), and

plenary (encompassing all of Scripture), with God working through the authors' experiences and personalities.

5. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy was a written agreement produced by the International Congress on Biblical Inerrancy to define, affirm, and clarify the doctrine of inerrancy among evangelicals from various backgrounds. It aimed to establish unity on this foundational aspect of biblical authority.
6. According to the Chicago Statement, inerrancy strictly speaking applies only to the autographic text, the original manuscripts of Scripture. It affirms that copies and translations are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original autographs.
7. Kevin Van Hooser, while affirming the full inerrancy of the Bible, proposes that infallibility is a broader category encompassing inerrancy. He suggests that while Scripture is inerrant in all its types of literature concerning truth and error, infallibility describes its unfailing ability to accomplish God's various purposes through its diverse genres.
8. Van Hooser argues that the Bible aims at more than just communicating truth; it also imparts wisdom, warns, encourages, and energizes. While these functions are carried out truthfully (inerrantly), simply labeling them "inerrant" does not fully capture their intended effect and power. For example, a parable is inerrant in its teaching, but its primary purpose is often to impart wisdom through a narrative that draws the reader into a decision.
9. Inerrancy informs exegesis by emphasizing the importance of paying close attention to the words, sentences, context, genres, arguments, and themes of any passage because the Word of God comes to us in the language of human authors. A commitment to inerrancy also encourages recognizing the Bible's unity and doctrinal consistency, leading to the "analogy of faith," where Scripture is compared with Scripture for harmonious interpretation.
10. According to Dunbar, as presented in the lecture, the church recognized the canon of Scripture rather than established it. Apostolicity, understood in terms of content and chronology related to the apostles' teaching about Christ, was considered a qualifying factor for canonical recognition.



## Essay Format Questions:

1. Discuss the implications of affirming both the divine and human authorship of Scripture for how one approaches biblical interpretation. Consider both the strengths and potential challenges this dual nature presents.
2. Evaluate the significance of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy in the context of contemporary theological discussions about the authority and truthfulness of the Bible. What are some of its key affirmations and denials, and why are they important?
3. Compare and contrast the concepts of inerrancy and infallibility as presented in the lecture. How does Kevin Van Hooser's perspective contribute to a nuanced understanding of these terms? What are the potential benefits of distinguishing between them for biblical study and application?
4. Explore the relationship between the inspiration of Scripture and its resulting authority and inerrancy. How does the belief in divine inspiration logically lead to the affirmation of the Bible's authority and truthfulness?
5. Discuss the role of the canon of Scripture in Christian faith and practice. How did the early church recognize the authoritative books, and why is the concept of a defined canon important for understanding biblical authority and interpretation?

## Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Autographs:** The original, handwritten manuscripts of the biblical books.
- **Authority (of Scripture):** The Bible's right to teach truth and command obedience because it originates from God.
- **Canon (of Scripture):** The collection of books recognized by the church as the authoritative Word of God.
- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a biblical text.
- **Hermeneutics:** The theory and practice of interpreting texts, including the Bible.
- **Inerrancy:** The doctrine that the original autographs of Scripture are completely truthful in all that they affirm.
- **Infallibility:** The doctrine that Scripture is incapable of error and reliably accomplishes God's purposes.
- **Inspiration (of Scripture):** The supernatural work of the Holy Spirit on the human authors of the Bible, so that what they wrote was precisely what God intended to communicate His truth.
- **Plenary Inspiration:** The belief that all parts of Scripture are equally and fully inspired by God.
- **Verbal Inspiration:** The belief that God's inspiration extends to the very words of Scripture, not just the general ideas.

## **5. FAQs on Peterson, Revelation & Holy Scripture, Session 18, Infallibility and Inerrancy, Results, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions on the Doctrine of Scripture**

#### **1. What does it mean to say that Scripture is God's Word, and what are the reasons for this affirmation?**

Scripture is affirmed as God's Word because the Bible itself routinely calls its writings "the sacred writings." Furthermore, God directed the human authors in their writing, resulting in divinely inspired texts. Scripture also bears the characteristics of God and performs key functions aligned with His purposes. Lastly, Jesus and the apostles often attributed Old Testament statements to God that were not originally explicitly attributed to Him, indicating that when Scripture speaks, God speaks. Importantly, while being God's Word, the Bible is also simultaneously a human book, given through human authors in human language within historical contexts.

#### **2. In what ways is Scripture considered authoritative?**

Because Scripture originates from God, it inherently possesses His authority, which is defined as the right to teach truth and command obedience. Biblical authority, therefore, is the right to teach God's truth and command obedience. Scripture has supreme authority over beliefs and behavior, urging reverence and humble submission to its entirety. Rejecting biblical authority leads to the creation of one's own beliefs and rules for living, essentially forming a self-made religion. Christians are called to be humble listeners to Scripture, respecting, believing, and obeying it, even when it contradicts personal preferences.

#### **3. What is meant by the inspiration of Scripture, and what are its key characteristics?**

The inspiration of Scripture refers to the supernatural work of God's Holy Spirit on the human authors, ensuring that what they wrote was precisely what God intended to communicate His truth. This inspiration is dynamic, with God actively working through the personalities and thoughts of the human authors while directing their writing. It is also verbal, extending to the very words used, not just the general ideas. Furthermore, inspiration is plenary, meaning it encompasses all of Scripture, not merely parts of it. The result of this inspiration is that Scripture is inerrant, truthful in all that it affirms.

#### **4. What is the doctrine of inerrancy, and what are some important clarifications regarding it, such as those outlined in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy?**

Biblical inerrancy asserts that Scripture in its original autographs is completely truthful in all that it affirms, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy clarifies several key aspects: inerrancy applies to the original texts, not necessarily all copies or translations (though faithful representations are also God's Word); it extends to all matters the Bible addresses, including history and science, not just spiritual themes; and it acknowledges the human aspects of Scripture, such as varying literary styles, lack of modern technical precision, and use of figures of speech, which do not negate its truthfulness. The statement also emphasizes that the authority of Scripture is undermined if its inerrancy is limited or disregarded.

#### **5. How does the doctrine of inerrancy relate to the interpretation (hermeneutics) of Scripture?**

Inerrancy significantly informs how Scripture should be interpreted. Recognizing that God's Word comes through human language necessitates careful attention to the words, sentences, context, literary genres, arguments, and themes of each passage to understand the author's intended meaning. A commitment to inerrancy also involves appreciating both the diversity and the underlying unity and doctrinal consistency of the Bible. This leads to the hermeneutical principle of the analogy of faith, where Scripture is compared with Scripture and interpreted in harmony with its overall message, affirming that the Bible does not contradict itself and is its own best interpreter (though not its only one).

#### **6. What is the biblical canon, and how did the church recognize it?**

The biblical canon refers to the authoritative books of the Bible. The church recognized, rather than established, the canon. The early church, following figures like Irenaeus, considered apostolicity as a key qualifying factor for canonical recognition, understanding this not strictly as authorship by an apostle, but encompassing content and chronology aligned with the teachings and interpretations of Jesus by the apostles. The church acknowledged God's providential control in the historical process of canon recognition, viewing the canon as fundamentally Christological or redemptive-historical.

**7. What is the distinction being made between inerrancy and infallibility, particularly as proposed by Kevin Vanhoozer?**

Historically, inerrant and infallible were often used synonymously, both indicating the truthfulness and reliability of Scripture. However, a more recent distinction, notably proposed by Kevin Vanhoozer, suggests that inerrancy is a subset of infallibility. While affirming the full inerrancy of the Bible (that it is truthful in all it affirms), Vanhoozer argues that infallibility is a broader concept encompassing the various purposes and effects that God's Word unfailingly accomplishes through its diverse literary genres. Scripture aims at more than just communicating truth; it also imparts wisdom, warns, encourages, offers hope, and energizes. While these actions are carried out truthfully (inerrantly), the description of "inerrant" alone does not fully capture the intended impact and power of these different forms of communication. Infallibility, in this view, speaks to the unfailing accomplishment of God's purposes through His inerrant Word.

**8. According to the sources, what are some potential negative consequences of rejecting the inerrancy of Scripture?**

Rejecting the inerrancy of Scripture is considered to have grave consequences for both the individual and the church. If one picks and chooses what to believe from Scripture, they essentially elevate their own authority above God's. Limiting or disregarding the total divine inerrancy impairs the inescapable authority of Scripture and can lead to serious loss. Furthermore, a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is considered vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith, and rejecting inerrancy can undermine this foundation with detrimental effects.