

The Inerrancy of the Bible

A Valley Bible Church Position Paper
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The truthfulness of the Bible has come into question from many even who call themselves Christians.

We believe the Bible is completely truth in everything it teaches, whether explicitly or implicitly. It more than accomplishes its purpose without failure, it does so without communicating erroneously. If the belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is in anyway denied or limited, then the necessary result is damage to the authority of God and His Word. To diminish the authority of the Bible has definite negative consequences upon mankind and more importantly, is dishonoring to God Himself. If God said it, it is true.

Inerrancy defined

By the term *inerrancy* we mean that God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original manuscripts.

God is true and cannot err

Most people accept that God is not a man that He should lie (Numbers 23:19). It is indeed impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2) for it goes against His very character (1 John 1:5-6). God cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). This is why Jesus is called the truth in John 14:6. Jesus did not act deceitfully in any way (1 Peter 2:22).

That God is completely truthful is an essential issue to the Christian faith. If Jesus were capable of error He would not be holy and the just One able to atone for the sins of the world (Hebrews 4:14-16).

The Bible is God's Word

The Bible specifically claims to be the Word of God (John 10:34-35; Hebrews 4:12). It is inspired or breathed out by God (2 Timothy 3:16) and also called the "oracles of God" (Romans 3:2; Acts 7:38). As God's Word, the Scripture carries divine authority. When Jesus spoke of the Bible He considered it authoritative by using "it is written" (Matthew 4:4,7,10). He regarded it as unbreakable (John 10:35) and imperishable (Matthew 5:17-18).

Furthermore, Paul wrote that the Scripture is the Word of God (Romans 9:6). The writer of Hebrews also declared the Scripture to be the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). It is called the Word of God because it proceeds from God's mouth (Matthew 4:4), meaning He is the Originator of the words.

The Paul wrote that all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). It is the Scripture that is inspired, not the writers. The writers of God's Word were moved by the Holy Spirit to write the text (2 Peter 1:20-21). We can observe the individuality of the human authors of each Bible book and how their own distinctiveness became incorporated into their work. God superintended the human authors so that using their own individual personalities, they composed His revelation to man.

Significantly, when the Bible quotes itself, it relates its words as God's words. Examples of this can be seen by comparing Genesis 2:24 with Matthew 19:4-6; Psalm 2:1 with Acts 4:24-25; Psalm 2:7 with Hebrews 1:5; Psalm 16:10 with Acts 13:35; Psalm 95:7 with Hebrews 3:7; Psalm 97:7 with Hebrews 1:6; Psalm 104:4 with Hebrews 1:7; and Isaiah 55:3 with Acts 13:34.

Conversely, when we compare Genesis 12:3 with Galatians 3:8 and Exodus 9:16 with Romans 9:17, we can also see that the Bible quotes the words that God spoke in the Old Testament and assigned those words to being what the Scripture spoke. The Scripture and the Word of God are interchangeable references, demonstrating that God's Word is the Bible and the Bible is God's Word.

If God cannot err and if the Bible is God's Word, then the Bible cannot contain errors.

God's Word is truth

That God's Word is truth is demonstrated beyond the deduction above on why the Bible cannot contain errors. Jesus specifically states that God's Word is true in John 17:17. Lying is a product of man, not God (Romans 3:4).

Man understands lying as including intent to deceive. Lying is not simply communicating misinformation mistakenly thought to be true but we must know it to be false. However, unlike man, God is omniscient (Job 28:20-28, Psalm 139:2-4, 17-18; 147:4-5; Jeremiah 17:10; Romans 11:33; 1 John 1:5).

God has perfect knowledge of all things and therefore He cannot speak mistakenly. God has full knowledge of all His communication. If anything God says is in error then He is either not completely holy or not completely knowledgeable.

All of God's Word is truth

The Bible teaches that all of God's Word is truth (Psalm 119:160; John 10:34-36; 2 Timothy 3:16).

It is truthful in everything it teaches as true, whether explicit or implicit. Some have sought to regard the Bible as truth in spiritual matters only and suggest that the Bible may contain historical or scientific errors. Yet the Bible does not make such a distinction. In fact, Jesus Himself testified directly to several of the most questioned historical accounts in the Bible, including Jonah (Matthew 12:40), Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4) and Noah (Matthew 24:34-39). It is inconsistent to believe what God says regarding spiritual truth, which we cannot verify, and not believe what God says other matters, which can be verified (John 3:12). If God is not reliable in the details that we can understand and evaluate apart from God's specific revelation (i.e. earthly matters), what confidence do we have in what He has told us that cannot be known apart from God's specific revelation (i.e. spiritual matters)?

The truthfulness of the Bible extends beyond the concepts to the very words themselves. There is a necessary link between correct words and correct concepts. Jesus argued for His deity on the basis of the word "Lord" from Psalm 110:1 (Matthew 22:41-46). Jesus vindicated himself from the charge of blasphemy on the basis of one word from Psalm 82:6 (John 10:34). The Lord noted even the tense of a word (Matthew 22:32) and Paul argued from point of the grammar (Galatians 3:16). Even the smallest stroke of the pen is Scripture (Matthew 5:18). These examples show that the entirety of God's Word is inspired and thus without error.

The importance of the inerrancy of the Bible

Some Christians have devalued the truthfulness of the Bible because they believe that it is not essential to the commission to preach the gospel of Christ. While inerrancy is not technically essential to salvation, it is logically essential to salvation. If you lose this fundamental doctrine, you place all other doctrines in jeopardy. We can see this connection by observing that the anti-Christian doctrine that is currently found in many denominational universities began with a debate over the truthfulness of Scripture.

The significance of departing from upholding the integrity of God's Word increases when we understand what is being impugned. When people deny the inerrancy of the Bible they attack:

- The character of the Father who originated the Word.
- The reliability of the Son who affirmed the Word.
- The ministry of the Holy Spirit who inspired the Word.
- The stability of the Church which is built on the Word.

While defending inerrancy has been called divisive, it is those who deny this doctrine who have caused division in the church and have brought God and His Word into question. The defense of the integrity of God and His Word is important.

Conclusion

God can allow error, but He cannot produce error. Since God inspired the Bible, it cannot contain error. This can be compared to Jesus who was sinless Himself but did not prevent people from sinning around Him. If Christ can be human and without flaw, then the Bible can be human and without flaw.

Although humans are quite prone to error, they are not necessarily untruthful about everything they say. It is possible for men to communicate truthfully. God worked through man to communicate His inspired truth in the Bible without error.

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