

Chapter 5- The Inerrancy of Scripture:

Are there any errors in the Bible?

A) The Meaning of Inerrancy (90-92)

- 1) The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm any thing that is contrary to fact.

Ps. 12:6: The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

Prov. 30:5: Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Num. 23:19: God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

- a) This definition does not mean that the Bible tells us every fact there is to know about any one subject, but it affirms that what it does say about any subject is true.
- 2) The Bible can be inerrant and still speak in the ordinary language of every day speech.
 - a) e.g. The Bible can speak of the sun rising and the rain falling because from the perspective of the speaker this is exactly what happens.
 - b) Inerrancy has to do with truthfulness not with the degree of precision with which events are reported.
- 3) The Bible can be inerrant and still include loose or free quotations.
- 4) It is consistent with inerrancy to have unusual or uncommon grammatical constructions in the Bible.

B) Some Current Challenges to Inerrancy (92-99)

- 1) The Bible is only authoritative for “faith and practice.” (92-95)

- a) The purpose of Scripture is to teach us in areas that concern “faith and practice” only, so it is possible that the Scripture makes false statements in other areas, such as historical or scientific facts.

- b) Often referred to as a belief in the *infallibility* of Scripture.

- c) Response to this objection:

- i) The Bible itself does not make any restriction on the kinds of subjects to which it speaks truthfully.

1 Tim. 3:16: Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Ps. 12:6: The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

Ps 119:96: I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad.

Prov. 30:5: Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

- (a) The New Testament contains further affirmations of the reliability of all parts of Scripture, including numerous references to OT historical events.

Acts 14:14: But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out,

Rom. 15:4: For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

1 Cor. 10:11: Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

Heb. 11

- ii) This position mistakes the *major* purpose of Scripture for the *total* purpose of Scripture.
- 2) The term inerrancy is a poor term. (95)
 - a) *Inerrancy* is too precise a term and denotes a kind of absolute scientific precision that we do not want to claim for Scripture. Furthermore, the term itself is not used in the Scriptures.
 - b) Response to the objection:
 - i) The scholars who have used the term *inerrancy* have defined it clearly for over a hundred years, and they have always allowed for the “limitations” that attach to speech in ordinary language.
 - ii) We often use non-biblical terms to summarize a biblical teaching. (e.g Trinity, incarnation.
 - iii) The term is ubiquitous in the discussion regarding Biblical authority, and it is not helpful to try to eliminate the term from the discussion at this point.
- 3) We have no inerrant manuscripts; therefore, talk about an inerrant Bible is misleading. (96-97)
 - a) Inerrancy has always, only been claimed for the original manuscripts, none of which survive, making the discussion pointless.
 - b) Response to the objection:
 - i) For over 99% of the words of the Bible, we know what the original manuscripts said; therefore, we can affirm the inerrancy of the words in the manuscripts to the extent that they are the same as in the originals.
- 4) The biblical writers “accommodated” their messages in minor details to the false ideas current in their day, and affirmed or taught those ideas in an incidental way. (97-98)
 - a) When the biblical writers were attempting to make a larger point, they sometimes incidentally affirmed some falsehood believed by the people of their time.
 - b) Response to this objection:
 - i) God is Lord of human language who can use human language to communicate perfectly without having to affirm any false ideas.
 - ii) Such an “accommodation” by God to our misunderstandings would imply that God had acted contrary to his character as an “unlying God.”

Num. 23:19: God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

Titus 1:2: in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began

Heb. 6:18: so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

iii) A process of accommodation, if it actually had occurred, would create a serious moral problem for us, if we are to imitate God and God is proved to be a liar.

Lev. 11:44: For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground.

Luke 6:36: Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

Eph. 5:1: Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

5) Inerrancy overemphasizes the divine aspect of Scripture and neglects the human aspect. (98)

a) Response to this objection:

i) It is agreed that Scripture has both a human and a divine aspect; but this does not demand that the Scripture possesses errors to be “human.”

(a) God was overseeing the process of the writing of Scripture.

(b) Human speech and writing can be absent of error.

6) There are some clear errors in the Bible.

a) Response to this objection:

i) In which specific verse or verses do these errors occur?

ii) The small number of problem texts should not be the basis of the rejection of inerrancy.

C) Problems with Denying Inerrancy (99-100)

1) If we deny inerrancy, a serious moral problem confronts us: May we imitate God and intentionally lie in small matters also?

2) If inerrancy is denied, we begin to wonder if we can really trust God in anything he says.

3) If we deny inerrancy, we essentially make our own human minds a higher standard of truth than God’s word itself.

4) If we deny inerrancy, then we must also say that the Bible is wrong not only in minor details but in some of its doctrines as well.