

Inerrancy
Is it true?

Clarity and Sufficiency

- If a text is wrong, then how can it be said to be clear?
- If a text is wrong, then how can it be said to be sufficient for how to view anything at all?

Clarity and Sufficiency

- For a text to be clear, it has to be telling the truth.
- If a text lies, then it is sufficient to propagate a lie.
 - This is common sense. Clarity and Sufficiency are only good as doctrines, if the bible is also true.

What is “inerrancy”?

- In 1978, a group of Christian leaders met to address what they saw as a growing problem.
 - “...the major philosophical and theological debates have been over the question, ‘How do we know what is true?’”

What is “inerrancy”?

- God only speaks truth.
- Holy Scripture doesn't fail, that is, it always succeeds.
- The Holy Spirit can show anyone exactly what it means.

What is “inerrancy”?

- 1 – always true
 - 2 – the words always do what they’re supposed to do
 - 3 – God is in charge of both giving the words and understanding the worlds
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- Therefore – The bible does not err, it is inerrant. It is always true.

What is “inerrancy”?

- Negative case - What is an error?
 - Deceit – biblically ruled out automatically.
 - Ignorance – also biblically ruled out, both in God’s inherent knowledge and in that God is in charge of what is known.

What is “inerrancy”?

- *Why should we assume the bible should be honest about itself?*

What is “inerrancy”?

- What does “true” mean?
 - No *less* than correct.
 - Accuracy – true or correct.
 - Precision – the degree to which a thing is being measured.

Accuracy

- If I say that this presentation
 - will take less than a day –
 - will be held in the morning -
 - will be after the service –
 - will be held from 11 am to 12 pm -
- *I am being accurate every time, but of differing degrees of precision.*

Precision

- If I measure a particular distance, I may say that it is
 - 1 kilometer
 - 1000 meters
 - 1,000,000 millimeters
 - 1,000,000,000 micrometers
 - 1,000,000,000,000 nanometers
- *Each time I am being accurate, but with growing degrees of precision.*

“400 pages”

- All the demands of the questioner have been satisfied.
- Slightly imprecise, but accurate, can convey something in a way that is more true, than greater precision.
 - Gas prices.
 - Sale prices.
- *However*, If talking to a publisher, precision becomes very important in conveying truth.

Ordinary and Technical

- The bible is not written as a technical manual
- God does not give us the mechanics of creation, but the fact of creation is no less true.
- The bible was written in language that anyone should be able to understand enough of it to know Him.
 - Sufficient
 - Clear

What is “inerrancy”?

- True - a characteristic of God and how He communicates.
- Accurate - an amoral synonym for true.
 - Remember the 398 pages to the publisher and 400 to the student. Both are clear and appropriately accurate for that particular context.
- Precise – no more precision than is necessary to communicate what is true and have the desired understanding.

Accuracy and Precision

- Different order of events in the gospels.
- Different names in Kings vs. Chronicles.
- Different number of people present in different gospels.
- *What claim does the bible make of itself?
Precision or accuracy?*

- *“Now, many writers have enumerated what are sometimes called qualifications to inerrancy” inerrancy is compatible with unrefined grammar, non-chronological narrative, round numbers, imprecise quotations, prescientific phenomenalist descriptions (e.g., “the sun rose), use of figures and symbols, and imprecise descriptions (as Mark 1:5, which says that everyone from Judea and Jerusalem went to hear John the Baptist). -*

- *“I agree with these points but I do not describe them as qualifications: These are merely applications of the basic meaning of inerrancy; that it asserts truth, not precision. Inerrant language is language that makes good on its own claims, not on claims that are made for it by thoughtless readers.”*

- John Frame – The Doctrine of the Word of God, 174.

- Mark 5:1 - They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.
- Matthew 8:28 - And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes,
- Luke 8:26 - Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.
- Gadara – more precise.
- Gerasa – less precise.
- *But neither give an exact location. Does the difference in precision amount to an error?*

- Mark 5:1 - immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit
- Matthew 8:28 - two demon-possessed men met him,
- Luke 8:27 - When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons.
 - “If there are two people there, would it not also be correct (accurate, not precise) to say that there is one person there” – James MacDonald
- Mark, who likely received the narrative from Peter, is incredibly visceral in his description, whereas Luke and Matthew, less so. Representative of Peter’s excitable and somewhat impulsive personality.

- 2 Samuel 10:18 – David slew 700 men.
- 1 Chronicles 19:18 – David slew 7000 men.
- “It is very easy to leave off or inadvertently add a “zero” when copying down a number in round figures. The ancient systems of numerical notation were susceptible to this kind of mistake, for they too used decimal notations that were as easily confused as Arabic or Roman numerals.” - Gleason Archer, “Alleged Errors and Discrepancies,” *Inerrancy*, Geisler, ed. 1980
 - Just as we can write out the number using numerals or letters, so could these authors.
- Is this an *error*?

The Smallest Seed?

- *“He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”* Matthew 13:31-2
- What should we expect from Jesus when he gives an illustration to people who know nothing of the microscopic? Is this a discourse on horticulture, or an analogy comparing what seems insignificant to the untrained eye with what God sees and does in His Kingdom?

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- The application of the *text* demands an understanding that is literal to the degree it can be understood in that context.

Irreconcilable Difficulties?

- What do we do when we can't reconcile two texts?
 - The historical flow and the details of the text, are so consistently accurate, and the details which differ are so insignificant in comparison with the meaning and application of the text, that the benefit of the doubt must be given to the inerrancy of the original documents, with the assumption that scribes made errors in copying from the originals.

The Nestle-Aland 26-28: 1979 to the present

- These are the scholarly editions of the Greek text.
- *There are no differences in the Greek Text from 26 to 27.*
- *There are 28 differences from 27 to 28.*
 - *None are in the Gospels nor in Paul's epistles.*
 - *13 of the changes go towards an older version, not a new version.*
 - *All but one are either the rearrangement of words or the insertion of a preposition or article or pronoun, which doesn't change the meaning at all.*
 - *The one that is of consequence has been known for some time as a variant, and remains in strong dispute.*
- We will deal with this in much more detail in January.

The gospel in the KJV and in the ESV

- The translators of the KJV had the Vulgate (Latin, Roman Catholic text), and 8 Greek manuscripts, only three of which were complete and even these were scholarly summaries by Erasmus, Beza, and Stephanus, not originals.
- When one compares key passages, passages in which the gospel and Christ's work and God's sovereignty and the necessity of repentance and faith are made clear, there is *no* conceptual difference between the KJV and the ESV/NASB.
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God is in control of how people know about him.

- We now use almost 6,000 Greek manuscripts and nearly 60,000 total manuscripts in making sure that we have the originals, and the differences between the KJV and our modern, literal translations are miniscule and change the meaning of the text, that is, what God is saying, not a bit.
- *Nobody's going to hell for reading the KJV."* – John Piper.
- ****As you come to difficulties or challenges that are new for you, do not worry, bring them out into the open, and let's discuss them together.**