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## **Inerrancy – from “How We Got the Bible”**

By: Sid Litke, Th.M – March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008

### **Introduction**

1. “Inerrancy” is a term used to explain that the Bible is completely true and contains no errors in the original autographs. The reason inerrancy is an issue is because some religious “scholars” believe that the scripture contains errors, yet they continue to claim to believe in “inspiration.” Actually, they’re trying to redefine “inspiration” to include possible errors. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss “inerrancy” because it assures that we understand inspiration to mean “without error.”

2. When inerrancy is denied, it begins a “slippery slope” effect. The denial of inerrancy often leads to the denial of other literal truths. Historical facts are taken as myths/stories (It is often claimed for example that the creation of the world and man in Genesis 1-12 wasn’t meant to be taken literally). Biblical viewpoints on issues, such as homosexuality or women’s roles, are easily denied when inerrancy is denied. One otherwise evangelical “errantist” acknowledges that Paul said, “Wives submit to your husbands” but he feels that “Paul was wrong.” It is one thing to interpret what a scripture means, but we don’t have the freedom to claim that a Bible author wrote something that was “wrong” or “in error.”

### **I. Inerrancy described (from Dr. Norman Geisler, Dallas Seminary class notes, 1983)**

**A. Definition:** The Bible is wholly true (in whole and in part) in all that it affirms.

#### **B. Logical reasoning**

1. The Bible is God’s word (Matthew 4:4-11).
2. God is always truthful (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18).
3. Therefore the Bible is completely true (inerrancy).

#### **C. “What scripture says, God says”**

<b><u>Bible Said</u></b>	<b>=</b>	<b><u>God Said</u></b>
Isaiah 55:3	=	Acts 13:34
Psalms 16:10	=	Acts 13:35
Psalms 102:26	=	Hebrews 1:5-6
Psalms 104:4	=	Hebrews 1:5-6
Etc.	=	Etc.

Throughout the New Testament there are quotes of Old Testament writers that are explicitly attributed to God. The fact that what scripture says is also what God says tells us that God's truthfulness is bound up in Scripture's truthfulness. To deny the total truthfulness of the Bible is to deny the total truthfulness of God.

#### **D. Questions**

*1. Why must there be flawless originals if our copies are not?*

Answer: Because God produced the original and He cannot err.

*2. Why didn't God preserve the copies from all error?*

Answer: He did preserve it from significant error, but just like God allows other things we don't understand, we must accept that He had a good reason.

*3. How accurate are our copies of the original Hebrew and Greek texts?*

Answer: About 99% accurate. We have 100% of the truth we need. The main issues are disagreements about which words were the original ones. We don't lack any of the original – we just have some disputed extra.

Note: Actually, we have thousands of existing manuscripts – each containing a variety of copying errors. But the fact that we have so many copies actually enables us to decide very closely what the original was.

Example: If you would receive 3 telegrams, each containing an error.

#OU HAVE WON \$1,000.

Y#U HAVE WON \$1,000.

YO# HAVE WON \$1,000.

The truth is clear, even if the telegrams disagree on their errors.

## **II. Inerrancy defended**

Critics of inerrancy are quick to point out that there are supposedly contradictions in the Bible and that some statements in scripture are not literally or scientifically true. Two principles must guide out thinking about inerrancy.

### **A. Apparent contradictions are not necessarily real contradictions.**

1. Some writers do not give all the truth about a certain event, but they do give only the truth. Parallel accounts may give different details. But they are not contradictory – merely complimentary.

*How many angels were at Christ's tomb? Matthew 28:1-7 refers to "an angel; Luke 24:4 speaks of two angels.*

ANSWER: Two angels were at the tomb. Where there are two angels, there is also one angel.

*What was the inscription on the cross (Matthew 27:37 versus John 19:19)?*

ANSWER: The complete inscription was evidently more words than either verse states. But everything in each verse was really on the inscription.

2. Some errors are errors in copying. These do not discredit inerrancy, which simply claims the originals are inerrant.

3. Some apparent contradictions are solved by facts we do not know.

2 Samuel 24:24 says David paid 50 shekels of silver for the threshing floor property. **1 Chronicles 21:25** says 600 shekels. Perhaps the threshing floor was 50 shekels, and with the surrounding property, the total was 600.

2 Samuel 21:19 says Elhanan killed Goliath. 1 Samuel 17:50 says David did. Maybe David had 2 names (like Solomon did – 2 Samuel 12:24;25). Or maybe Elhanan killed Goliath's brother ("the brother of" was maybe omitted by a copyist). Or maybe there is another legitimate explanation.

Modern example: By Dr. Kenneth Kantzer:

"Several years ago the mother of a friend of ours was killed. We first learned of the death through a trusted mutual friend who reported that the woman had been standing on the corner of the street, at a bus intersection, waiting for a bus and had been hit by another bus passing by, and was fatally hurt, dying a few minutes thereafter. Shortly thereafter, we learned from the grandson of the dead woman that she had been involved in a collision, was thrown from the car in which she was riding and was killed instantly. The boy was quite clear; this was all the information he had. His story was not only quite clear and positive, but he had secured his information directly from his mother. No further information was forthcoming from either source. Now which would you believe? We trusted both our friends, but we certainly could not put the data together. Much later, upon further inquiry, we learned that the woman had been waiting for a bus, was hit by another bus and was fatally hurt. She had been picked up by a passing car, dashed to the hospital, but in this haste, the car in which she was being transported to the hospital collided with another, she was thrown from the car and died instantly."

4. The Bible is innocent of error until proven guilty. Based on the Bible's self-claim of inerrancy and the mass of evidence for inerrancy, we can assume there are good explanations for apparent contradictions. The burden of proof is on the critic. There are

at least plausible explanations for all so-called discrepancies (See Charles Ryrie, Basic Theology, pp. 95-104).

**B. Inerrancy allows for other forms of truth in human language besides technically literal truth.**

1. Approximations – In Acts 7:6, Stephen may be approximating when he says the Egyptians captivity was 400 years while Exodus 12:40 says it was 430 years. Legitimate approximations do not violate inerrancy. If I actually say, “My ancestors came to America 100 years ago,” in context it is a legitimately true statement whether it was actually 110, 101 or 110 years.
2. Figures of speech – Christ is obviously not literally a “door” (John 10:7). He is the “entrance” in eternal life, however. Scriptural truth involves many figures of speech and symbols. But all such truth is still literal in that even figures of speech convey literal truths.
3. Language of appearances – When the Bible says the “sun set,” it merely is using a language of appearances, as we do, to convey the literal truth that the day ended.
4. Popular, not scientific truth – In Matthew 13:32, Jesus referred to the mustard seed as the “smallest” of seeds. Botanists today know of many smaller. But Jesus simply used the proverbial understanding of the mustard seed, which was considered smallest of the seeds, as popularly known in Palestine. This does not violate inerrancy.

From: <https://bible.org/seriespage/inerrancy>

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