

A Light in the Darkness

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

Inerrancy | Three Possibilities*

- Purposive Inerrancy (Infallibility): Though Scripture includes minor factual errors and contradictions, that doesn't matter in the least because Scripture inerrantly accomplishes God's purposes for it to 1) provide the revelation necessary to bring individuals into a personal relationship with Christ 2) instruct them how to live in the Kingdom and 3) communicate the overarching narrative of redemption in Christ to the glory of God.
- Critical Inerrancy: The Scriptures, when properly interpreted, are wholly true in everything that they communicate and teach.
- Absolute Inerrancy: The Bible speaks precisely and accurately on all matters, including scientific and historical details.

A Biblical Defense of Critical Inerrancy

- Breaking Down the Definition
 - “properly interpreted”
 - Phenomenological descriptions
 - Approximations and Estimates
 - Figurative Language and Proverbial Statements
 - “wholly true in everything they communicate and teach”

The Direct Argument | Old Testament

- *Aman, emet* and *amunah*
 - Most of the OT evidence for inerrancy is contained in the Psalms and centers around two word-groups, the first of which are words stemming from the verb *aman* meaning to support, confirm or be faithful.
 - Ps. 19:7-9 | “...the just decrees of the Lord are *true*, and righteous altogether.”
 - Ps. 119:86 | “All your commandments are *sure...*” (*almunah*)
 - Ps. 119:151 | “But you are near, O LORD, and all of your commandments are *true.*” (*emet*)
 - Ps. 119:142 | “Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is *true.*” (*emet*)
- *Sarap* – “tested or tried”
 - Ps 12:6 | “The words of the Lord are *pure* words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.”
 - Ps. 18:30 | “This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD *proves true*; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.”
 - Prov. 30:5 | “Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”

The Direct Argument | New Testament

- Jesus's View of Scripture

- Matt. 22:29

- Jesus appeals to their lack of understanding of Scripture as the reason that they are wrong (Gr. *planasthe*, to be mistaken in judgment or be deceived), implying that if one understands the Scripture correctly, one will always be right in those affirmations.

- Jn. 10:31-38

- Jesus appeals to the inability of Scripture to be broken (vs. 35) to make his case against the Jews seeking to stone him.

- Jn. 17:17

- Jesus prays the Father would protect his disciples and set them apart by his *word*, which is the truth.

The Direct Argument | New Testament

– Historical Confirmations on the Lips of Jesus

- Adam and Eve (Matt. 19:4-5)
- Cain and Abel (Lk. 11:51)
- Noah and the Flood (Matt 24:37-39; Lk. 17:26-27)
- Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10:15; 11:23-24)
- Experience of Lot (Lk. 17:28-32)
- Moses the lawgiver (Matt. 19:8; Mk. 7:10)
- David eating the shewbread (Matt. 12:3-4; Lk. 6:3-4)
- Splendor of Solomon (Matt. 6:29; Lk. 11:31)
- Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath (Lk. 4:25-26)
- Elisha and Naaman the Syrian (Lk. 4:27)
- Jonah and the fish (Matt. 12:39-41; Lk. 11:29-32)
- Moses raising up a bronze serpent in the wilderness (Jn. 3:14)

– Jesus quoted the OT liberally and always assumed it was without error (hence the frequent preface, “it is written”). Ultimately, Jesus’s statement that not an iota or dot of the Law and the Prophets would pass away until their fulfillment (Matt. 5:18) *presupposes* that even the smallest details of the OT are true (otherwise, they couldn’t be fulfilled).

The Direct Argument | New Testament

- Other NT Testimony to Inerrancy
 - Jn. 21:24
 - John claims the truthfulness of his own recorded witness
 - 2 Pet. 1:16-20
 - Peter implies that his confidence in prophecy exceeds his own personal experience in the presence of Jesus!
 - 2 Tim. 2:15
 - Paul describes Scripture as the “word of truth.”
 - Rom. 5:14, 17; 1 Cor. 15:45
 - Paul’s typology seems to verify the historicity of Adam
 - Paul believed that he spoke the commands of God (1 Cor. 14:37), the “word of truth” (Eph. 1:13) and that if anyone taught *anything different* from the Gospel he taught, they stood condemned (Gal. 1:9).

Why Not Absolute Inerrancy?

- The Bible does not claim for itself precision in scientific or historical matters (or in some cases, theological matters).
- Conventions of the time for reporting history and reproducing teaching are looser than what is generally required by absolute inerrancy.
- Taking certain claims of Scripture *precisely* seems to lead to internal contradictions, not inerrancy. Paul's 23,000 (1 Cor. 10:8) vs. Moses's 24,000 (Num. 25:9) is a great example.
- When evaluated according to contemporary scientific categories, absolute inerrancy seems, again, to lead to errancy. For example, in contemporary entomology, no insect has only four legs (Lev. 11:20).
- For these reasons and others, it seems best to adopt a more nuanced understanding of inerrancy that better fits the intended purposes of the authors of Scripture and the historical and teaching conventions of the time.