

Inerrancy and Infallibility- “Purity of the Truth”

Introduction

There are two theological terms that are often used to explain the nature of the Bible— inerrancy and infallibility. They are used to point out how the Bible is different from all other books that have ever been written. Many use these terms interchangeably. Infallibility means incapable of making a mistake, while inerrancy means the absence of any error. Simply put, the Bible never fails to give only the truth.

I. Inerrancy of the Bible

- A. Definition: “the characteristics of the written Word of God being without error as given in the original autographs and extended to the apographs (copies).” Inerrancy means that the Bible is without any error throughout whether speaking historically, scientifically, or morally.
- B. Explanation: The term itself is borrowed from science and applied to the Bible with divine origin. The Bible is without error as a written, perfect record even in sciences. An inerrant Book indicates a perfect Author. Inerrancy focuses on the very character of God because God cannot lie, nor can He produce error. The Bible claims that every detail within its pages is without error.
- C. Wrong views of inerrancy: There are a number of inadequate views of inerrancy as well. Limited inerrancy states that not all Scripture is without error. Second, inerrancy of purpose states that the Bible is true only when it accomplishes its purpose. Another is the irrelevancy of inerrancy which states that inerrancy is pointless and a waste of time. Last, some believe since the Bible does not clearly teach inerrancy, neither can we.
- D. Proofs of Inerrancy: (many of these verses are also used for inspiration)
 - 1. God’s words are pure words like silver in a furnace (Psalm 12:6).
 - 2. God’s law is perfect and His statutes are are right (Psalm 19:7-9)
 - 3. God’s word is very pure and I love it (Psalm 119:140)
 - 4. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth (John 17:17)
 - 5. All scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for us (II Tim. 3:16-17)
 - 6. Ye received the word of God from him and not from man (I Thess. 2:13)
- E. Christ and Inerrancy: The perfection of Scripture is verified by our Lord Jesus, Himself because in Him, the fullness of the Godhead dwells (Col. 2:9). He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6), He is the living Word (John 1:1), and since Jesus is God (Col. 1:15-16), His description of Himself encompasses all Scripture inspired by His Holy Spirit.
 - 1. Jesus fulfilled over 300 prophecies of his arrival and departure. If this were not so, our hope in what the Bible promises is broken.
 - 2. Matthew 4:1-11- when combating the temptations of Satan, Christ used Scriptures
 - 3. Matthew 5:17-18- Christ came to fulfill Scripture, and it will never fade away
 - 4. John 10:31-38- Christ quotes Scriptures to them to teach them
 - 5. Matthew 22:23-33- He showed the Sadducees what it means to actually know what the Bible says
 - 6. Matthew 22:41-46- Christ reminds the Sadducees again what the Bible says

II. Infallibility of the Bible

- A. Definition: “The characteristic of the written Word of God of being totally authoritative in both the autographs and apographs due to inerrancy, and thus it is fully trustworthy.” The word infallible can simply mean “not liable to fail.”
- B. Explanation: Acts 1:3 uses the word “Infallible” which is **τεκμήριον (tekmarion)** in the Greek. This is the only time this word is used and it means “that from which something is surely and plainly known” or “an indubitable evidence, a proof.” Infallibility is similar to inerrancy, but focusses more so on Scriptures’ authority and trustworthiness
- C. Objections: There are also a number of objections to biblical authority.
 - 1. First, Relativism states that the Bible is not absolute or relative to us today.
 - 2. Next, some believe in limited inerrancy which leads to limited trustworthiness, infallibility, and authority.
 - 3. Some would rather exalt experience above the authority of Scriptures.
 - 4. Last, many claim independence from the Bible and choose to not submit to its authority. As Christians however, we can rely on the certitude and accountability of the Bible being our only authority we must keep in line with.
- D. Basis for Infallibility: If God is infallible, then so will be His Word. The doctrine of Scripture’s infallibility is based on an understanding of God’s perfection of character.
 - 1. It is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18, Titus 1:2).
 - 2. God’s Word is perfect, refreshing the soul because God is perfect (Psalm 19:7).
 - 3. God is closely associated with His Word, and is called “the Word” with Christ (John 1:1, 14).
 - 4. God is truthful and perfectly reliable, and so is His Word (John 17:3)
 - 5. The Bible claims complete perfection (Proverbs 30:5, Hebrews 4:12).
 - 6. Since all Scripture is God’s Word, it cannot be fallible, and it’s true for every person’s life (James 1:5-6).

III. What is the difference between Inerrancy and Infallibility?

- A. Infallible means trustworthy: When referring to Scripture, the term infallible is usually used to mean reliable and trustworthy. It refers to something that is without any type of defect whatsoever. Those who trust its infallible teachings will never be lead astray.
- B. Inerrancy means there are no errors whatsoever: While some Christians use inerrancy and infallible interchangeably, they are normally used in slightly different ways. Inerrancy contends that the Bible does not have any errors of fact or any statements that are contradictory. Inerrancy is more concerned with the details of Scripture.
- C. Infallibility is the broader term. It deals more with personal knowledge of the Lord rather than details. For example, one who believes in inerrancy will also believe in infallibility. The reverse, however, is not necessarily true. There are those who argue that the Bible can contain errors of fact while still accomplishing its purpose—to bring humanity into a relationship with God. They see no problem trusting the Bible as the final standard of authority on all matters of faith and practice, though it may contain some errors. However, many others think the idea of an infallible, but not an inerrant Bible is something that is absolutely nonsensical.

Conclusion

Inerrancy and infallibility are logical corollaries to inspiration and in no way diminish the human authorship of scripture. If what the authors of Scripture penned was indeed under the supernatural influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit (as is properly affirmed), then since God is true, what they wrote and affirmed is in all ways true as well. The doctrine rightly teaches that the scriptures are without error in all that they affirm, whether they refer to geographical, historical, or theological issues, and are fully trustworthy in every way. Thus, the scriptures are the final authority in matters of faith and practice and take precedence over tradition, culture, and creed.