

### The Doctrine of Inerrancy & Authority – Part I

- Inerrancy, what does it mean?
  - The Bible is without error in the *original autographs*.
  - The original texts which were written by the biblical authors were without error.
- What does it NOT mean?
  - The doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture does not include in its definition the claim that all modern translations are without error. Human translations without doubt contain some error on the basis that the original autographs are inspired, but that translations are not inspired.
  - The Bible is made up of 66 books, written by 40 authors, in 3 languages, over 15 centuries, on 3 continents. Those original writings do not contain any errors.
  - Through the centuries, as humans have sought to make copies of the original autographs or translate them into languages other than the languages in which they were written, some error has crept in, but not theological, historical, or scientific error where the translators have used the oldest and most reliable manuscripts.
- This begs the question, if only the originals were inerrant, and we don't have the originals, isn't the doctrine of inerrancy meaningless? No.
  - Textual criticism, which is the scientific approach to certifying ancient manuscripts, is concerned with the identification and removal of transcription errors in the texts of the biblical manuscripts.
  - Ancient scribes often made errors or alterations when copying manuscripts by hand. They may have misspellings, repeated words or lines, transposed words or letters, etc. But a comparison of the copies we have today renders for us a HIGHLY accurate text.
  - By comparing all the ancient manuscripts available, it is possible to determine where the variant errors are. If nearly all of the 5,000 manuscripts render a verse the same way, except for 20-30 manuscripts which drop a word or misspell a word or rearrange a phrase, it becomes clear that the 20-30 are the variant errors, and the remaining nearly 5,000 copies are accurate.
  - Conversely, if a later manuscript copy includes words or phrases that the older and more reliable manuscript copies do not contain, then the added words of the later manuscript copy are considered accretions (make larger through growth).
- The quantity of New Testament manuscripts is unparalleled in ancient literature.
  - There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts, about 8,000 Latin manuscripts, and another 1,000 manuscripts in other languages (Syriac, Coptic, etc.).
  - In addition to this extraordinary number, there are tens of thousands of citations of New Testament passages by the early church fathers.
  - In contrast, the typical number of existing manuscript copies for any of the works of the Greek and Latin authors, such as Plato, Aristotle, and Caesar ranges from 1 to 20.
- Then we have the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were found in 1947.
  - These scrolls were ancient manuscripts of the OT text.
  - 38 of the OT's 39 books were included in the scrolls (Esther was the only one not in the collection).
  - These manuscripts predated the latest copies in existence at the time by around 10 centuries.
  - The conclusion of decades of comparative study since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is that the scrolls validated the accuracy of the manuscript copies we already had in existence at the time of the discovery of the scrolls. This was the most significant archaeological find of the 20th century.
- So, what about errors in translations? How do we know that our NASB, NIV or KJV are accurate? A brief comparison of the major scholarly translations of the Bible into the English language shows that they all say the same thing. Translation variations do not vary as broadly as changing events or doctrines. Translation variations usually involve such variations as the order of words in a verse, or the use of different words which convey the same meaning. For example:

- NASB Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- NIV Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
- KJV Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
- Ultimately, the issue is - Can we get at a reliable copy of the original manuscripts and are modern English translations accurate? The answers are yes and yes. The processes of textual criticism and comparative studies confirms for us a reliable and accurate facsimile of the original autographs.