

Part 9 – November 8, 2009

"What Does It Mean That the Bible Is Inerrant?"

Scripture & the Internal Testimony of the Spirit

1 John 5:7-11

- Testimony of God over the testimony of men
- The Bible is a solid Rock against the attacks of those who seek to undermine it
- Don't get shaken to the foundations by the latest attack
- "Thank God for liberalism"

The Meaning of Biblical Inerrancy

1 John 5:7-11

- Bethlehem Affirmation of faith, Article One:

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

- What Does "Without Error" Mean?

The Bible is "without error" in the sense that all that the Biblical authors intended to teach is true and does not conflict with reality or with the will of God.

Explanation: "...intended to teach..."

I use this phrase for two reasons:

- 1) A writer should not be accused of error because someone construes their words in a way the writer does not "intend." The meaning of a text is not whatever anyone can construe from the words, but what the writer intends for the language to teach. For example, if I say to a friend in Detroit, "I'll be there at 10 A.M.," meaning Eastern Standard Time; and he construes the words to mean 10 A.M. Central Standard Time, I have not erred if I arrive an hour earlier than he expects. I may have been unclear, but I was not wrong. So the meaning of a writer should not be considered false just because the words could be used to express error.

- 2) The word "teach" reinforces this point by implying that a writer might say things which he is not teaching. For example, I may say to my son, "Pick your mother up at the town square." My teaching is that he should get his mother at the place known as the "town square." I am not teaching that he should lift her off the ground in his arms, nor am I teaching that the town square is the same length on all four sides. If the "town square" is 100' by 105' I have not erred, and if my son never touches his mother, but brings her home from there, he has not disobeyed. Both the word "intended" and the word "teach" are meant to protect a writer from accusation of error when there is none.

Some Implications for Reading Scripture

- Accurate descriptions of natural events as what one simply sees are not scientific errors. (E.g., "The sun rises in the east.")

Joshua 10:13

Revelation 6:13

- Idiomatic exaggerations are not errors. (E.g., "It scared me to death.")

Genesis 22:17

Jeremiah 33:22 (Explaining the idiom)

How, Then, Shall We Handle the Bible?

- Reverence the Bible as Holy: the unique Word of God written
- Cherish the word of God as supremely valuable, only under God Himself.
- Study the Word of God seeking to understand the original meaning with your mind.
- Pray over the Word of God that God would illumine your mind to see what is really there.
- Meditate on the Word of God, reflecting both on the meaning and the implications for your life.
- Memorize the Word of God so that it feeds you, transforms you, and is available for use in blessing others.
- Spread the Word of God by supporting missions and translation work, and by giving away copies and portions to others.
- Obey the Word of God, as the highest authority in your life.