

The Doctrine of Inerrancy

Dr. Charles Feinberg identified three *qualifications* on the doctrine of inerrancy.

1. *Inerrancy applies to all areas of scripture as originally written.* This allows for the understanding that the copies and translations we have are not inerrant, but that they accurately reflect the originals, which are inerrant. This we believe first because God is faithful to preserve His Word, and second, because textual criticism demonstrates how accurately the Bible has been copied and translated throughout the centuries.
2. *Inerrancy is intimately tied to hermeneutics.* This affirms that the scripture is true, even though there can be error in our interpretation of scripture.
3. *Inerrancy is related to scripture's intention.* There are things recorded in the Bible that are not approved by God.

Dr. Feinberg pointed out eight common *misunderstandings* regarding inerrancy.

1. *Inerrancy does not demand strict observance to the rules of grammar.* There are errors in grammar. Rules of grammar are man-made and formal. They do not necessarily need to be followed by the writers of scripture.
2. *Inerrancy does not exclude the use of figures of speech or particular literary styles.* The Bible contains many different kinds of writing, including poetry, symbolism, and even hyperbole. If a reader insists that all sections of scripture be read and interpreted in the exact same manner, he will encounter problems. However, by interpreting various sections of scripture based on the literary style in which the passage is written, there will be no problem.
3. *Inerrancy does not demand historical or numerical precision.* An example of this is differing records of numbers in the Bible. One author may report an event, recording that a particular number of people were present. Another author may record a different number of people present at the same event. The difference in numbers does not negate the accuracy of the point being conveyed, since the numbers are not the purpose of the scripture.
4. *Inerrancy does not demand the technical language of modern science.* For example, the Bible records the sun rising in the east. Scientifically, the sun does not rise or set, the earth rotates. Those who fault the Bible on these grounds must also throw out all the great poetry that speaks of sunrises or broken hearts, since these are not scientifically accurate. The Bible is not a science text. Though it does not present scientific data, neither does it oppose scientific data.
5. *Inerrancy does not require exact quotations of the OT in the NT.* Though NT citations of OT scriptures are not always exact, they do not change the meaning; they are often based on translations of the OT that were available to NT writers; and they are inspired by the same Holy Spirit who inspired the OT writers.
6. *Inerrancy does not demand that the exact words of Jesus be contained in the Bible.* Jesus spoke in Aramaic, the NT was written in Greek. Therefore the original manuscripts were translations in the first place.
7. *Inerrancy does not guarantee that every incident is completely recorded.* The synoptic gospels give different takes on the same events, and not every aspect of everything recorded in the Bible is exhaustive.
8. *Inerrancy does not guarantee the accuracy of sources cited by biblical authors.* Inerrancy only guarantees that the writers are accurately cited. The sources may have been in error.