

“Inspiration, Authority, and Inerrancy”
The Revelation of God - Week 6 - Summer 2019

- **The Inspiration of Scripture**

- This discussion is really a formalization of much of what we’ve seen in the past 5 weeks...
 - God is a God who discloses Himself to us, by nature.
 - We labored to show that God has intended from the very beginning to preserve His redemptive acts and speech in a *written* Word.
 - ❖ According to Scripture (and Christ!), God’s written Words bear the same authority as His spoken Word.
 - ❖ As if He were present!
 - This tells us that God’s written Word is His very word, coming directly from Him.

2 Timothy 3:16 - All Scripture is inspired by God [i.e., God-breathed] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness...
- Written Scripture (or the vast majority of it) did not just fall down from heaven.
 - With the exception of the 10 Commandments, the contents of the Bible were written by men.
 - ❖ Sometimes by dictation (mechanical inspiration)...
 - ❖ Most often through God superintending the lives and intentions of the authors of scripture (verbal inspiration):

2 Peter 1:20–21 - ²⁰ knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
 - A good definition of Biblical Inspiration is:

“a divine act that creates an identity between a divine word and a human word.” Frame, J. M. (2010). *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (p. 140). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

- ❖ The human inscribed words on the pages of scripture are identical to God's own Words.
- ❖ Note: it is not just the *ideas* of Scripture that are inspired in this way, but the very *words* of Scripture.

- **The Authority of Scripture**

- If every word of Scripture is identical to God's own Word, then it follows that every word of Scripture has the full weight of God's own Authority.
- In the Church, this means that God's Word is the final court of appeal, there is no higher...
 - ▶ Not teachers or tradition (though both are helpful).
 - ▶ Not individual opinion.
 - ▶ Certainly not the Pope.
 - ▶ But the Bible alone:

WCF 1:10 - The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

- **The Inerrancy of Scripture**

- God's written Word is Inerrant.
 - ▶ God's written Word contains no errors.
 - ▶ But also, God's written Word is *incapable* of error, by definition.
 - ❖ Only two types of errors would be possible in Scripture.
 - ❖ There could be errors of deceit or errors of ignorance.
 - ❖ But God cannot lie:

Titus 1:2 - in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago...
 - ❖ And God is ignorant of nothing:

1 John 3:20b - ...for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

- ❖ It is a prior assumption of the Christian worldview that a Word from God cannot and does not error.
- Many are quick to say the Bible *does* err.
 - ▶ Some say the Bible has a problem with lack of precision.
 - ❖ People point to various things to accuse the Bible of being “imprecise”
 - Rounded numbers/figures
 - Images/metaphors
 - Even parables (“there wasn’t *really* a man with two sons...”)
 - ❖ People look at this lack of precision and say it’s evidence of fallibility in the Bible.
 - ▶ These arguments are absurd for a number of reasons.
 - ❖ Slavish precision is not demanded in regular human discourse, yet the resulting imprecision is not understood to be erroneous in any other context.
 - “It’s raining cats and dogs” is an imprecise statement, yet, when it’s raining hard, it’s not judged as false.
 - [From John Frame] A professor might tell his students they must read 400 pages when the actual number is 398.
 - ★ Yet no student would come back later and say, “You lied!”.
 - ★ Rounding numbers is an understood way of true human communication (always has been).
 - [Also Frame] When we tell people our age, we’re routinely imprecise.
 - ★ What we’re really doing is telling them how old we were at our last birthday, even if it’s 11 months later.

★ Yet no one is accused of deceit or ignorance.

❖ The Bible also never claims to be a technical journal or manual; rather, it presents itself as a communication under normal human convention, which, again, assumes imprecision.

➤ In fact, communication of anything is impossible without some imprecision.

➤ Otherwise every statement would require endless qualification and elaboration.

▶ So to the sophists that unjustly hammer the Scripture on its “imprecision”, a good response is:

❖ Inerrancy means the Bible *always* makes good on its claims.

❖ The Bible always asserts truth, but not always precision (like all conventional communication).

❖ We should not judge the Bible by inappropriate, arbitrary standards.

- Implications and Applications

- We must heed all of God’s inspired, authoritative, and inerrant Word.
- We should never presume to judge God’s Word, as if it must submit to our standards of value, authority, etc.
- Instead, we must remember that the Scripture is our judge.