***Biblical Inerrancy - CA-020***

Occasionally, I am asked, "What denomination is Berean Memorial church? What kind of church is Berean Memorial Church?" People who ask this are looking for the name of some denomination. In case you don't know, the correct answer is independent bible. We are an independent church. We're not affiliated with any denomination, and we are a Bible church. We use the Bible as our rule and guide. If the Bible teaches it, we believe it and we practice it. If it doesn't, then we try to stay away from those teachings and customs which are not at least implicit in the Bible.

**Biblical Inerrancy**

So since we are a Bible church, it is incumbent upon us to know what we believe about the Bible. And one of the principles that we believe and we apply, when it comes to Bible doctrine or doctrine about the Bible (bibliology), is that the Bible is inerrant. That means there are no errors in the Bible. We believe the Bible is absolutely true.

If you think of this for a moment, it would make no sense at all to base our spiritual lives, and stake our eternal destiny on what is taught in a book that may have mistakes in it. Even if it were only a few mistakes, it would be a very serious error, because that one mistake might be the very one that we are staking our eternal well-being on. So we believe and we teach the doctrine of biblical inerrancy.

**Limited Inerrancy**

This is a very important doctrine. Some people don't believe in inerrancy. Some people believe there may be a few mistakes in the Bible. And there are those who teach what is known as limited inerrancy, which is another way of saying "errancy." If the inerrancy is limited, that means there may be some mistakes in it, which means that those who hold this doctrine believe in an errant book – that the Bible might have mistakes in it.

**The Sabbath**

If the Bible teaches some things that are inaccurate, and if the Bible is not totally reliable in everything it says, then this casts doubt on every major doctrine of the Bible. For example, if God did not create the world in six days and rest on the seventh day, then there is no doctrine of the Sabbath. If there is no doctrine of the Sabbath in the Old Testament, then there is no doctrine of Sabbath rest in the New Testament. Jesus is called "our Sabbath." We don't work for salvation. We rest in Him. If there is no literal truth in the six-day creation and rest on the seventh, then there's no doctrine of the Sabbath.

**Divorce**

Another example would be the doctrine of marriage and divorce. Jesus was asked about this in Matthew 19:3: "Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him, and asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?'" Now, different rabbis had different opinions on this, and Jesus could have said, "Well, Rabbi Hilhil says that divorce is forbidden for any circumstances; Rabbi Gamaliel says, 'Yes, only under certain circumstances is divorce legitimate.' Another rabbi might say that the circumstances are even more strenuous. Another might say, 'You can divorce anybody anytime you want to as long as you go through the correct procedure.'" But He didn't. He didn't say any of these things. He didn't quote anyone. In verse 4, He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning, male and female?" Then He said, "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." He was quoting the book of Genesis. So that tells me that Jesus was a creationist. Jesus believed in a literal Garden of Eden, and a literal Adam and Eve. And he based his doctrine on the inerrancy of Scripture. He didn't really care what this rabbi and that rabbi believed about marriage. He went back to the original source for the doctrine of marriage.

**Adam**

What about 1 Corinthians 15:22? The apostle Paul says, "For in Adam all die, so that in Christ all will be made alive." You're standing on thin ice if you say that, "We're all dead in Adam, but there wasn't an Adam. Adam was not a real person. Adam was just symbolic of something." I'm not sure what he was supposed to be symbolic of. But the doctrine of salvation is gone, once you say, "There was no real Adam for people to be in before they were in Christ."

**The Resurrection**

What about the resurrection? If Jesus didn't physically (bodily) rise from the dead, and if He did not have a literal physical body that Thomas could poke his finger into, and if he couldn't sit down and eat a meal of fish and honeycomb, then they're saying that Jesus was a spirit being: "Yes, He rose from the dead, but only in a some kind of spiritual way." Well, that means there's no redemption for our bodies. That means that we will only rise in some kind of intangible spiritual way, whatever that means.

So every important doctrine (every major doctrine) of the Bible rests on inerrancy. Once someone says they believe in limited inerrancy, or they don't believe in inerrancy, what they're saying is that the Word of God is not to be trusted. You cannot build your life or your eternal destiny upon it.

**The Details**

I want to give you some Scriptures that you're already familiar with. But I want to lead you through these Scriptures so that we can do some serious thinking. We hear some believer (who is a good speaker) tell us that the Bible is not 100% true and accurate in every detail, but there are errors in the Bible, but it really doesn't matter because it's true about what it says spiritually. They say that there may be a few mistakes here and there, historically and geographically, but whatever it says is true spiritually.

Our antenna is going to go up, and we're going to be able to say, "No, if it's not true in the details (in the physical things that it talks about, as far as geography and history, and when it touches on science, it's accurate), then we cannot build our spiritual foundation on it. But if it is true, which it is, in every area that it touches on, then it is something that we need to really take seriously and build our spiritual lives and our eternal destinies on the Bible.

When you hear some unbelievers say, "Well, I would believe the Bible, but anyone knows that there are mistakes in the Bible," you'll be able to show them from the Word of God that this is logically inconsistent. We're going to go through these Scriptures, and then I'm going to show you some logical inconsistencies in taking the position of limited inerrancy.

**Jesus Believed in Inerrancy**

First of all, I want to call your attention to the fact that Jesus believed that the Bible is inerrant. The Bible has no mistakes. In Matthew 12:39, they had asked Him for a sign, and Jesus answered to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign. Yet no sign will be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet."

Jesus said, obviously, that He believed in the story of Jonah and the sea monster. He didn't believe it was a parable. He didn't believe it was a myth. He believed in the literal physical truth of Jonah and the sea monster, just like He believed that there was a physical Adam who was the first man created, and that Eve was made from his rib, and was his wife.

**Inerrancy is not Scientific Precision**

Before we get too far into inerrancy, let me tell you what inerrancy is not. Some people will stretch anything to an extreme. So remember this. Inerrancy is not absolute scientific precision. Inerrancy is referring to common everyday speech – taking words at face value.

Let me give you a couple of examples. Think in your mind (you don't have to tell anybody), how much money did you earn last year? Just think of that figure. Now, I bet everybody in this room is thinking of a round number. Maybe you made $20,000 dollars last year. Maybe that's what you're thinking. But really, you probably made $19,256.47. But if you tell people, "I made $20,000 dollars last year," are you lying? Are you going to get thrown in jail by the IRS? No. Even the IRS lets you round off numbers today. So we're not talking about absolute scientific precision.

If you start out the back door and you look toward Fort Worth as you leave tonight, and you see a beautiful orange-colored sky, and you say, "What a beautiful sunset," I'm not going to say, "You just made a gross scientific error. Everybody knows the sun doesn't set. The sun stands still, and the earth rotates around the sun. You should have said, 'How beautiful it is when the earth spins around on its axis, and we get a glimpse of the sun over the horizon.'" We don't hold people to that kind of absolute scientific precision, and absolute scientific speech in everyday speech.

What if, to make a point, I said, "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch?" Everybody here would know what I meant: that if someone wants to offer you something that they say is free, watch it. It's really not free, unless it's salvation. Now, I did two things that are not right there? I made a grammatical mistake intentionally to make a point: "There ain't no." And I said something that's not technically true. There may be a free lunch. Tomorrow somebody may say, "Why don't you go to lunch with me, and it's on me?" So maybe there is such a thing as a free lunch, and maybe I'm grammatically wrong to say, "There ain't no free lunch." But the truth of what I said still remains – the point I was trying to make. In everyday speech, we don't hold people to absolute scientific precision speech. So guess what? When we come to the Bible, we shouldn't do that either. We need to leave room for figures of speech, round numbers, and so on.

**The Mustard Seed**

I'm belaboring this because I recently heard someone say that the Bible cannot be inerrant. He even went so far to say that Christianity could not be true because Jesus made a mistake. Here's the mistake that Jesus made: In Mark 4:31, Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which when sown upon the soil, although it is smaller than all the seeds that are in the soil, yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the plants of the garden, and forms large branches so that the birds of the air can rest under its shade." Jesus said that the mustard seed is the smallest seed, but modern scientific research has shown that there are many seeds smaller than the mustard seed. In fact, there are some bacterial spores which are so small you can't even see them unless you have a powerful microscope. So this person said Jesus made a mistake, so you can't believe anything He said.

The truth is, Jesus was speaking to a group of Galilean farmers and peasants, and the smallest seed they knew anything about was the mustard seed. That's what He used as an example, and that's what He said.

Now, He could have said, "There is a seed which is even smaller than the mustard seed, and you can't even see it unless you have a powerful microscope. And you don't even know what a microscope is, but in about 1,500 years from now, men will invent a powerful magnifier through which you can see tiny seeds which are even smaller than the mustard seed." If He had said that, and He could have, no one would have heard anything else He said. They would have been wondering about the microscope and these tiny seeds that you can't even see. But when He said, "The smallest of seeds," the implication that you know anything about is the mustard seed. He said, "That's like the kingdom of God. It has a small beginning, but after it takes off, it's really going to be great."

So Jesus was using everyday speech. He didn't claim to be speaking as a scientist. He didn't claim to be measuring things and speaking with scientific precision, but speaking in everyday speech that everyone understands. That's one thing about the Bible. It is clear. Anyone with an open mind and normal intelligence can read the Bible and understand what it's saying. They may not believe it. They might accept it or they might reject it. But the Bible is very clear.

What inerrancy means is that the Bible tells the truth in everyday speech, and it's very clear. The Bible means what it says. Just read the words of the Bible, and it means what it says in everyday speech. Words have meaning.

Now, let me belabor this a little bit more. Suppose that you picked up the morning paper tomorrow, and you read that at a local bar there was a big fight, and it took four policemen to break up the fight. Someone you know (maybe your next door neighbor) said, "Did you read about the fight in the local bar? There's not a word of truth in it. It said that there was a fight in a local bar, and it wasn't a bar. It's a lounge. Just go look at the sign on the window. It doesn't say, 'Tony's Bar.' It says, 'Tony's lounge.' And it said that four policemen broke it up. Well, I happen to know that two of the policemen didn't even go inside. One of them sat in the car and played with the radio, and the other one stood at the door to make sure no one went in or out. And of the two that went in, one was a woman (not a 'police*man*'). So all that stuff about four policemen breaking up the fight is nothing but a bunch of lies."

Now, what would you think? I would think, "Well, it sounds to me like the news story was fairly accurate, because they didn't claim absolute scientific precision. They gave you the facts of the story in everyday speech. There were four policemen, even though one was a woman, and it used the generic "man" – four policemen. And four policemen were involved in the mission to put down the fight in the local beer joint, bar, lounge, or cantina – they're all in the same vein, whatever you want to call it.

So this is the way the Bible speaks. It speaks in truth that anyone can understand. It's clear and understandable, and it doesn't claim to be able to fit into anyone's particular jargon. It just claims to be truthful, factual, and inerrant in any area that it touches on.

I want to lead you through some Scriptures that you're familiar with, but I want us to think about, as we look at these, what God says about the Bible. It really doesn't matter too much what we think. Let's see what God thinks. We're going to look at quite a few Scriptures. This is really the best kind of teaching. I just call your attention to what God says, and then we move on. That's the best kind of teaching.

In Isaiah 40:8, God says that His Word is eternal: "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever."

If you want to learn a good bibliology, a good teaching from the Bible about the Bible, you can find it all in Psalm 119. We're going to look at several passages in Psalm 119. Let's look at verse 89 first: "Forever, O, Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven."

Psalm 138:2: "I will bow down toward Your holy temple and give thanks to Your Name, for Your understanding and Your truth, for You have magnified Your Word according to all Your Name," or even "above all Your Name." God has a very high opinion of His Word – His written Word in what we call the Bible.

1 Peter 1:24-25: "All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which was preached to you." God says that the Bible is eternal. The Bible is totally trustworthy, in God's opinion. You know, you can pick a book up at a bookstore, and look at the back dust cover and the flap, and you can see what other people have said about the book. You can see what the author has said about the book. Well, this is what God says about His Book: it is eternal and trustworthy.

Proverbs 30:5-6: "Every Word of God is tested. He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His Word, or He will reprove you, and you will be found a liar."

Psalm 12:6: "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times."

Psalm 18:30: "As for God, His way is blameless. The Word of the Lord is tried. He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him."

Psalm 19:7: "The Law of the Lord (the Old Testament) is perfect, restoring the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true. They are righteous altogether."

Psalm 119:43: "Do not take the Word of Truth utterly out of my mouth, for I wait for Your ordinance."

Psalm 119:142: "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth."

Psalm 119:151: "Look upon my affliction and rescue me, for I do not forget your Law."

Psalm 119:160: "The sum of Your Word is truth." The King James translates this as, "Your Word is true from the beginning." That means from the very first verse of Genesis. "The sum of Your Word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting." I'm beginning to believe that God has a high opinion of His Word.

The Bible teaches us that the Word of God is not of human origin. We read in 2 Peter that holy men of old wrote the Word of God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:12 says that, "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." Obviously the apostle Paul is referring to the mind of Christ, the written Word of God, which is not of human origin, but from the Spirit of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:13: "For this reason, we also constantly thank God that when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of man, but for what it really is, the Word of God, which also performs this work in you who believe."

1 Thessalonians 4:8: "For he who rejects this (what Paul is writing, which is the Word of God) is not rejecting man, but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you." So God tells us very plainly that His Word is not of human origin. It's totally trustworthy; it's eternal, and it's holy. The word "holy" means it has moral excellence, and the Word of God is morally excellent.

Psalms 105:42: "For He remembered His Holy Word with Abraham, his servant." God's word is holy.

Psalm 119:123: "My eyes fail with longing for your salvation and for Your Righteous Word."

Let's look at some in the New Testament. In Matthew 4:4, when Jesus was being tempted by Satan, you notice that every one of His responses were from Scripture – each one from Deuteronomy: "But He answered and said, 'It is written man shall not live on bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" The Word of God is sustaining and nourishing for human beings.

2 Timothy 3:15: "That from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith, which is in Jesus Christ."

John 7:16: "Jesus answered them and said, 'My teaching is not Mine, but is His who sent Me.'" What Jesus taught, and was recorded in the New Testament was from God the Father – the very Word of God, and it is holy.

We have seen several Scriptures which strongly indicate that the Lord Jesus Christ had a deep respect for the Word of God, and He believed it was inerrant. Let's pursue this a little further. In Matthew 24:35, Jesus quotes a passage from Isaiah: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words will not pass away."

Matthew 5:18: "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished." Jesus had a high opinion of the Word of God – a high doctrine of Scripture.

John 5:47: "But if you do not believe his writings (Moses' writings), how will you believe My Words?" Jesus is putting the Old Testament, the writings of Moses, the first five books of the Bible, on the same level as His own Words. He had already said that His Word will last forever, and that His Word is from God the Father. Jesus had a high doctrine of Scripture.

John 10:35: "If he called them gods, to whom the Word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken." Jesus said, "The Scripture cannot be broken." You can't prove the Bible is not true. You can't find inconsistencies or contradictions in the Bible. And Jesus said that.

John 12:49-50: "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak." So again, Jesus emphasized that the words that He spoke, recorded in the New Testament, were on the same level as the Word of God which He held in very high esteem.

In John 17:8, in Jesus' high priestly prayer, He said to the father, "For the words which You gave Me, I have given to them, and they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that you sent Me." The words of God the Father are very important to Jesus.

In John 17:17, praying for us, He says, "Sanctify them in the truth. Your Word is true."

Luke 16:17: "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail."

Now listen to Mark 12:24: "Jesus said to them, 'Is this not the reason you are mistaken; that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God?'" He said, "This is why you Pharisees are so mixed up, and you have such strange doctrines. You don't understand the Scriptures."

**Jesus Would Have Called Out Errancy**

Now, the first logical inconsistency of limited inerrancy that I want to call your attention to is this: Jesus did not hesitate to tell people when they were wrong. He tore into the Pharisees several times about the traditions of men. The Jewish people had worked hard on these. The Talmud was a series of commentaries that the most learned and educated rabbis had written over the centuries, and Jesus said these traditions are wrong. Then He says, "You people keep making mistakes because you don't understand the Scriptures."

Now, the logical inconsistency is this: Jesus was always telling people the truth. If they were wrong, and if they were mistaken, He told them so, just like He did here. If the Bible had any mistakes in it, don't you think Jesus would have said the Scriptures err? But He never did. Here's an example. All through the gospels, when Jesus quotes the Scriptures (and He quotes the Old Testament many times), when we hear Jesus speak, we hear a mind that is saturated in the Old Testament. And Jesus always speaks of the Scriptures in reverence and in high esteem. If there had been any error in the Scriptures, Jesus would have said so, and He never did.

Let's look at some more Scriptures, and then I'm going to call your attention to the second logical inconsistency about limited inerrancy. Titus 1:2: "In the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ago." You say God can do anything. Well, here's something God cannot do. God cannot lie, because God's essence is that of absolute truth, and God can do anything since He's all powerful – anything that is consistent with His character and with His essence. God cannot sin, and God cannot lie, because God's character (His very essence) is that of absolute truth. So God cannot lie.

2 Timothy 2:13: "If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." God couldn't be unfaithful if He wanted to be. He could not be untrue to His own essence. It's absolutely impossible. God could not lie.

Hebrews 6:17: "So that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie." You know, the Bible only has to say something once for it to be true, but it keeps on repeating: "It is impossible for God to lie. We who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us."

John 3:33: "He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true." God's not going to mislead anybody. God is totally honest and totally truthful. His essence is that of absolute truth.

John 17:3: "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus, whom you have sent." When we speak of God, we sometimes say "the one true God," and this is who and what God is – the one true God whose essence is absolute truth.

**God Couldn't Allow Errors in the Bible**

Here's another logical inconsistency of limited inerrancy. All through the Bible, God describes Himself as the God of truth. If the Bible has things in it that are not true, then what does that make God? It makes the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of truth) an agent of deception. God cannot be true to Himself if there are errors in the Bible. It would mean that, "Well, God is either not who and what He says He is, and He is not the God of truth; or it would mean that God is not all powerful – that He could not preserve His Word from error; or, that maybe He could, but He chose not to." That would mean that He would not be good, as He says He is. So this is a logical inconsistency. The God of truth, who inspired the Bible, tells us plainly from the beginning to the ending of the Bible that the Bible is eternal, trustworthy, holy, and truthful. For Him to allow error to be in the Bible is a total logical inconsistency.

Speaking of the end of the Bible, Revelation 22:18-19: "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to it, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book. If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life, and from the holy city which are written in this book."

So it is absolutely inconceivable that God would describe Himself as the God of absolute truth, the absolutely truthful God, and His Word to be absolutely truthful, and then not preserve it from error. It is absolutely inconceivable that Jesus, the Son of God incarnate (and even the liberals believe that He was really a good man), even a good man, would lead people on, and let them believe, and encourage them to believe something that is not true, is totally inconsistent logically.

So here we are. There is no such thing as limited inerrancy. The Bible is inerrant. If someone says they believe in limited inerrancy, what they're saying is that they believe there are mistakes in the Bible. Do you remember what Jesus said? He said, "If I talk to you about earthly things and you don't believe Me, how will you believe Me if I speak to you of heavenly things?" So if the Bible made a mistake about geography, history, or science, then how in the world could you trust it for spiritual truths? And this is what people who claim to believe limited inerrancy are saying. They're saying, "Well, it may not be totally accurate in what it says about history, geography, and science, but you can count on it for spiritual truth. Again, this is logically inconsistent. They've totally destroyed their own case, and we need to confront them with it, very graciously, but in truth.

So the bottom line is this. What does it mean to us? It means that we can have our heads on right. We can have our thinking straight and orderly, and we can help others (believers or unbelievers) who say that the Bible has mistakes in it. Then this: Philippians 4:5: "Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near." This is a difficult word to translate, which the NASB translates as "gentle spirit." I believe that the best translation is "super reasonableness." Christians are not supposed to be reasonable people. We're supposed to be super reasonable people.

Sometimes you meet a super reasonable Christian. I meet them all the time here at Berean. But I've noticed something they seem to have in common. They all have a constant inflow of the Word of God into their minds. Their minds are always being renewed and cleansed by the Word of God. You can feel free to talk to these people. If you have a problem with them, you can sit down and talk about it, and work it out, and pray about it. All Christians are not like that. I've noticed also that the Christians who don't have this sweet, super reasonable attitude are Christians who are just kind of in and out about the Word of God. They don't have this constant taking in and cleansing and enlightenment which comes from a daily massive intake of the Word of God.

Remember John 17:17: "Jesus said to the Father, 'Sanctify them (us) by the truth. Your Word is the truth." If God the Father, and if the Lord Jesus Christ has such a high opinion of the Bible, then we should read it more; take it into our minds more; take it seriously; read it; meditate upon it; memorize it; and, live by it.

Leon Adkins, 2003

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