

Intro:

Before Christmas, we ended our Bible Study sessions on inerrancy with a 'summary' lesson reviewing our study thus far.

I did quote a few paragraphs from Ryrie's next chapter in that lesson and I will quote them again to get us started today:

"No one denies that there are passages in the Bible that contain problems of one kind or another. The inerrancy question does not involve interpretive problems or debates concerning the best text type. But problems of apparent discrepancies, conflicting numbers, differences in parallel accounts, or allegedly unscientific statements do concern the question of inerrancy.

"Errantists and inerrantists both have access to the same facts concerning each of these problems. Both have capable minds to use in interacting with those facts. Both can read the conclusions of others. But they do not come to these problems with the same basic outlook. The errantist's outlook includes not only the possibility but the reality of errors in the Bible. Therefore, when he studies these problems one of his possible conclusions is that one or another of them is actually an error.

"The inerrantist, on the other hand, has concluded that the Bible contains no errors. Therefore, he exercises no option to conclude that any of these same problems is an example of a genuine error in the Bible. His research may lead him to conclude that some problem is yet unexplainable. Nevertheless, he believes it is not an error and that either further research will demonstrate this, or he will understand the solution in heaven."¹

Today we are going to begin a look at some 'problem' passages. What kind of problems? Listen to this sentence from Ryrie again:

"But problems of apparent discrepancies, conflicting numbers, differences in parallel accounts, or allegedly unscientific statements do concern the question of inerrancy."²

When we began to look at the subject of inerrancy, I pointed one of these passages out to you. Now we need to look at a few more.

Proposition: Passages that present apparent problems for the doctrine of inerrancy have reasonable explanations that are compatible with inerrancy.

¹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology : A Popular Systemic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1999). 107.

² Ibid.

I. Problem Passages in the OT

A. The 'two accounts' of creation

1. The allegation is made that Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are two separate accounts of creation
2. The specific passages under attack in the area of inerrancy are Gen 1.11-12 and Gen 2.5
 - a. Gen 1.11-12: vegetation appears on the third day
 - b. Gen 2.5: no vegetation until creation of Adam [6th day]
3. The answers to the apparent problem
 - a. Genesis 2 adds details to Genesis 1 as supplementary material, not contradictory material.
 - 1) Gen 1.27 teaches us that God created man male and female [but not a male-female combo creature]; Gen 2.18-23 gives us details of that creation, giving us order and names.
 - 2) Gen 2.5 gives us details about the creation of vegetation on the third day.
 - b. The words in Gen 2.5 refer to plants that require cultivation, not to all kinds of plants.

“Plants that required such cultivation either did not appear until Adam was created and could then cultivate them, or they appeared but did not grow until Adam was created. ... Thus a contradiction and therefore an error appears in this account only for those who want it. Good exegesis requires no error.”³

B. Cain's wife

1. Not considered a problem by inerrantists, but a question often raised by those attempting to demonstrate that the Bible is unreliable.
2. The Bible clearly reveals that the human race descended from one couple.
 - a. Gen 3.20: Eve mother of all living
 - b. Mt 19.3-9: Jesus affirms that the first two created people were the beginning of humanity

³ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 109.

- c. Lk 3.38: genealogy of Christ traced to Adam
 - d. Jude 14: Enoch identified as the seventh from Adam, not 'mankind'
3. The Bible reveals that Adam had many sons and daughters (Gen 5.4)
4. Therefore:
- a. The first marriages after Adam and Eve had to be brothers and sisters.
 - b. The reason such marriages are harmful and forbidden today is the result of mutations in the genetic structure of mankind.
 - 1) Mutant genes produced deformations, illness, mental problems, etc.
 - 2) Such mutations are much more likely to be expressed in children if these genes are carried by both parents.
 - c. Adam and Eve, directly created by God, carried no defective genes.
 - 1) Marriage of their children [and grandchildren] would not have these problems.
 - 2) Defective genes were likely not introduced in great number for some generations, possibly not until after the flood with severe environmental changes affecting life.
- C. The plague at Ba'al Peor
- 1. Two numbers
 - a. Numbers 25.9 – 24,000
 - b. 1 Cor 10.8 – 23,000
 - 2. Two possible explanations
 - a. Paul says 'in one day' whereas the whole judgement may have occurred over several days.
 - b. Both passages may be using round numbers, with the actual number being somewhere between 23,000 and 24,000.

D. Who Caused David to Number Israel?

1. The passages

- a. 2 Sam 24.1 – the Lord
- b. 1 Chr 21.1 – Satan

2. The explanation: God has used Satan in the past, why not here?

- a. Job 1-2
- b. 2 Cor 12.7

E. Who killed Goliath?

1. The passages

- a. 2 Sam 21.19 – Elhanan
- b. 1 Sam 17.50 – David

2. Possible solutions

- a. Could David have had two names? Solomon had two names (2 Sam 12.24-25)
- b. Could there have been two Goliaths? See 2 Sam 21.20
- c. Could the words ‘the brother of’ have been omitted from 2 Sam 21.19?

“Any of these solutions is equally plausible rather than concluding the presence of an error. And all of them are more plausible in light of the proven accuracy of the Bible elsewhere.”⁴

F. Certain numbers in 2 Sam 24 and 1 Chr 21

1. The number of the men of war

- a. Acc to 2 Sam 24.9: 800,000 Israel, 500,000 Judah
- b. Acc to 1 Chr 21.5: 1.1 million Israel, 470,000 Judah
- c. But...
 - 1) Additional 300,000 listed in 1 Chr 27 for Israel
 - 2) Separate 30,000 for Judah mentioned in 2 Sam 6.1 [perhaps excluded from 1 Chr 21.5]

⁴ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p.111.

2. The years of the famine
 - a. Seven years (2 Sam 24.13)
 - b. Three years (1 Chr 21.12)
 - c. But...
 - 1) LXX says three years in both places
 - 2) Likely 2 Sam 24.13 is a scribal error [but no error in original]
3. The price of the property
 - a. 50 shekels (2 Sam 24.24)
 - b. 600 shekels (1 Chr 21.25)
 - c. But...
 - 1) But... if David paid 50 shekels for the threshing floor and 600 for the whole site, there is no discrepancy

Some might scoff at this solution, saying there is no proof.

Well. There is no proof that the solution is incorrect either.

This solution is certainly possible.

Our position is this: given that the word of God is breathed out by God through his prophets, we assume that God breathed correctly. [That is, God doesn't have bad breath!] God who is perfect cannot give an imperfect word, so we assume there is some solution, even if we are not 100% sure what the solution is.

- G. The laver in 2 Chr 4.2
 1. Measurements as given
 - a. 30 cubits circumference [540 inches if 1 cubit = 18 inches]
 - b. 10 cubits diameter
 2. But... what about π ?
 - a. 10 cubits x π = 565 inch circumference

- b. However, the brim was a ‘handbreadth’ thick – about 4 inches.
Inside diameter = 10 cubits (180 inches) - 2 handbreadths (8 inches) = 172 inches $\times \pi = 540$ inches in circumference

“These represent passages being currently used as illustrations of errors in the Old Testament. Without going into great detail, all I have tried to do is show that reasonable explanations are at hand. We need not conclude that errors are present in the text (with the exception of occasional copyists’ errors). How one views these suggestions will be a reflection of his underlying confidence, or lack of it, in the Bible itself.”⁵

II. Some NT passages

⁵ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 112.