

## ***129 Is the Bible inspired?***

Please excuse this slightly silly imagined conversation, where someone begins by asking me...

Do you believe that the whole of the Bible is the inspired word of God? ***Yes, of course, but it depends what you mean by ‘inspired’.***

Is the whole of the Bible literally true? ***Clearly not, but that’s not a meaningful question because the Bible texts take many different forms: historic, poetic, apocalyptic, parabolic etc.***

But is the whole of the Bible true, *in some sense*? ***Well, yes, but it depends what you mean.***

Are all the words that were written down and recorded for us the exact words that God would have wanted written down? ***Interesting question.***

*I then turn the tables:*

***OK, let me ask you: Are the authors of the books of the Bible sinless?*** No, they were sinners, just like the rest of us – well, David was an author, and he even recorded some of his own terrible sins.

***So can a sinful author, whose knowledge is incomplete create a text that is completely free of errors?*** Well, I suppose they *could*, but only if God supernaturally changed the words that the author was (erroneously) about to write – which I guess is approaching saying that God dictated the words.

OK, those were a few thoughts to get us started. But here are a few more genuine questions for you to consider:

- Could there be factual errors in the Bible? Would it destroy your faith if you found a few?
- Could the authors of the Bible have misunderstood the motives of God?
- Could the authors of the Bible have had a distorted view of God?
- If the authors of the Bible were fallible, can the Bible be *in*fallible?

These are some of the issues that I feel have so helpfully been tackled by Greg Boyd in *Cross Vision*.

His conclusion – if I understand him correctly – is that the OT authors had a limited and distorted view of God. However, having seen God in the flesh (‘If you’ve seen me, you have seen the Father’) we now know what God is *really* like, so we’ll hopefully make fewer errors in our understanding of God than they did.

So the way that GB sees it is that our view of the OT, our interpretation of the OT, has to be based on the cross. God was willing to accommodate the OT authors' misunderstandings, in order to draw people, in OT days and in NT days, to his love, as seen in Christ's sacrificial death.

Our job is to interpret the OT in the light of what we *now* know about God, but which they didn't know. We have seen the end of the story.

This passage (p56, author's emphasis) I think sums up GB's position:

To be clear, I affirm the traditional view that the Bible is infallible. If we trust the Bible to do what God inspired it to do, and if we are interpreting it correctly, it will not fail us. But the all-important question is, *what did God inspire the Bible to infallibly accomplish?*

If you expect the Bible to conform to contemporary standards of scientific, historical, literary, or logical perfection, I'm afraid you're going to be greatly disappointed. God did not inspire the Bible to meet these standards. As we've seen, God inspired all Scripture to point us to Jesus, and more specifically, to the cross that culminates everything Jesus was about.

I found that helpful; I hope you do too.

Paul Bev. 27.7.20