What is Biblical Inerrancy and Why Under Attack?

Today the Bible is under attack and Christianity in America is on the decline; the latest Gallup Poll (May 2017); 24% believe the Bible is to be taken literally; 26% see the Bible as “a book of fables and legends.”

The latest LifeWay Research survey showed that church attendance and impressions of the church are the lowest in history; this is most dramatic among Millennials (22-35 years old); only 20% believe church is worth attending; 60% raised in the church have dropped out; 35% believe the church does more harm than good.

Religious skeptics—atheists and agnostics and those with no religion make up 23% of our population.

To look at this study shows we are losing the battle; the Church is not doing her job; the average believer cannot defend their faith; in many churches the Bible is not respected as it once was from our pulpits.

The Defining of the Words Inspiration and Inerrancy

The meaning of inspiration... God breathed out His word to holy men who communicated that message by word and by pen; Scripture is the breath of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).

The meaning of inerrancy... The message God gave these men to write was overseen by the Holy Spirit so that what they wrote was without error; if God cannot error then His word cannot contain error; “All that the biblical authors intended to teach is true and does not conflict with reality or with the will of God.
Inerrancy only applies to the original autographs and not our translations; the biblical scholar on Bible translations Dr. Bruce Metzger said our Bible is 99.5% error free.

**The Disagreement over Biblical Inerrancy**

*Bart Ehrman*... He is head of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina; he argues there are 200,000 to 400,000 textual variants between handwritten Greek manuscripts of the NT; this is more variants than the 139,162 words in the Greek NT.

*Dr. Daniel Wallace*... He is professor of NT studies at Dallas Theological Seminary; he acknowledges the variants and gives an explanation; 70 to 80% are spelling errors and what he calls “nonsense errors;” there are “synonym errors” as in John 4:1; some manuscripts say, “When Jesus knew,” others say, “When the Lord knew;” is it Jesus or is it Lord?

The most serious errors are “intentional errors” where the scribe added to the text; the most serious example is Jesus forgiving the adulterous woman (John 7:53-8:11); this story does not appear in the earliest and most reliable manuscripts; it is even omitted from some translations.

Another example is the last 12 verses of Mark’s gospel (Mark 16:9-20); the oldest manuscripts we have do not contain it—the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus; some believe the end of Mark’s gospel got lost and some scribe felt it needed an appropriate ending.

Another is 1 John 5:7-8 found only in the KJV; this is actually a homily in the 8th Century and was added to the Latin text but wasn’t translated into Greek until 1520; to date there are only 4 manuscripts that have this variant; a scribe added these verses to the text to emphasize the doctrine of the Trinity.

What about those 200,000 to 400,000 variants that give proof the Bible is not the infallible Word of God? Ehrman came up with that number by counting the same variant over and over again every time a new manuscript was copied; if a misspelled word is copied 100 times before it is caught, Ehrman counts that as 100 variants; there may be 100 manuscripts with a misspelled word but realistically it is only one variant.
The Duty to Defend Biblical Inerrancy

*Scripture is under attack and we are called to defend it...* One of Satan’s schemes is to undermine the Word of God; He works both outside and inside the Church to do so; more damage comes from inside the Church than from the outside; Jesus referred to these people as false teachers and false prophets (see 2 Peter and Jude; Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:29-30.

The Church has been given the responsibility to guard against false doctrine (1 Timothy 6:20-21); we are called to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3).

How did the Church get into this mess where those within the Church seek to destroy the Word of God?; the Reformers taught “Sola Scriptura”—Scripture only; after the Reformation Europe emerged from the Dark Ages and into the Age of Enlightenment; human reason replaced divine revelation; the origin of the universe was now explained from a rationalistic, naturalistic, and even a deistic point of view; as men placed themselves above God and reason above Scripture it wasn’t long until rationalism gained a foothold into the Church through academic elitism; now theologians are denying what they once believed.

Liberalism is still very much alive in the Church (see Harold Lindell’s book, *The Battle for the Bible*); what has happened in the post enlightenment time is devastating; German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) identified religion with feeling and intuition than with Scripture; as a Lutheran, Schleiermacher has had an important influence on contemporary Protestantism.

After this came the cults—Joseph Smith and Mormonism, Ellen G. White and the Seventh Day Adventists, Judge Joseph Rutherford and the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science.

Then came the extremes in the Pentecostal- Charismatic Movements as they elevated personal experience as the arbitrator of truth and the interpreter of Scripture then came the Word of Faith with its health and wealth, Name-it-Claim-it theology, and its little god doctrine; this has led to the New Apostolic Reformation Movement with its self appointed apostles and prophets.

In addition, there is an inter-faith movement of so-called evangelicals who champion the message that all who worship one God will end up in heaven—this includes Muslims, Jews, Jehovah’s Witnesses and even atheists who are
searching for one God; one of its leaders is Peter Kreeft, Catholic professor at Boston College.

**Scripture is authoritative and we are called to declare it...** “All scripture is inspired of God...” (2 Timothy 3:16); our responsibility is to “Preach the word... (2 Timothy 4:2-4); we are to proclaim the word because it is truth (John 17:17); Scripture is often used as being synonymous with the name of God (Galatians 3:8; Romans 9:17); the author of Scripture calls Himself “the God of truth” (Isaiah 65:16); John tells us “that God is true” (John 3:33); in his epistle he speaks of the “true God” (1 John 5:17); Moses tells us that “God is not a man that He should lie... (Numbers 23:19); God’s Word has to be inerrant because God is truth and He cannot lie (see Proverbs 19:7; James 1:25).

The prophets knew they were setting forth God’s words (Amos 3:7); Paul said that God’s revelation is the foundation upon which the Church is to be built (Ephesians 2:19--3:7).

**Scripture is accurate and we are called to demonstrate it...** Peter tells us that we must “... always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is within you...” (1 Peter 3:15). Some will want real hard evidence—evidence from science, evidence from prophecy, evidence from the spade of the archaeologist; this we will be doing; the Bible does not conflict with science, it proves science; the Bible does not contradict history, it prophecies history before it becomes history; the Bible does not contradict the findings of archaeology, rather archaeology has been a great tool to confirm the Bible.

To bet against the Bible is to bet against the odds of chance; the probability of a single protein molecule being arranged by chance is $10^{161}$; it takes 239 protein molecules to form the smallest life; the probability of that happening is 1 in $10^{119,879}$; it would take $10^{119,841}$ years to get a set of proteins; that is $10^{119,831}$ times the age of the earth.

An English philosopher, Herbert Spencer, who died in 1903, was famous for applying scientific discoveries to philosophy. He said there are 5 knowable categories in natural science—time, force, motion, space, and matter; in Genesis 1:1 all 5 are mentioned—“In the beginning”—time; “God”—force; “created”—
motion; “the heavens”—space; “and the earth”—matter; you are only one verse in the Bible and it is all laid out for you!

Scripture is active through the power of the Holy Spirit and we are called to deploy it… The Bible is the sole power of salvation and sanctification; it is the means of salvation (Romans 1:16; Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23).

In evangelism, the Holy Spirit energizes the proclamation of the Word of God so one who is dead in sin can be reborn (1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

The Holy Spirit will never do His work without the Word; it is He who is behind the omnipotent force of the Lord’s promise when He said, “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please and prosper in the things for which I send it” (Isaiah 55:11). Amen!