

The Case for Biblical Inerrancy

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Nearly 2,000 years ago, a bewildered Pontius Pilate asked the man who stood before him, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). This simple question has been pondered again and again. It doesn’t take long to discern that many supposed “truths” contradict and oppose one another. This has caused some to conclude that truth is different for each person or that truth cannot be known. Yet these theories are terribly unsatisfying as well as illogical.

Jesus, the Messiah, the One who stood before Pilate that day, declared plainly to His Father God that “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). What a simple answer! And what a privilege to have this Word, the Holy Scriptures, preserved by God through the ages and available to us today! Yet many dispute the inerrancy of Scripture. This should not surprise us. Our ways are not God’s ways (Isaiah 55:8), so truth will at times amaze and astonish mankind.

Still, if this Word contains contradictions or inconsistencies as its detractors contend, that would be great cause for concern. In considering the inerrancy of Scripture, here are some questions for consideration:

1. What does it mean to be “without error”?
2. When we speak of Biblical inerrancy, are we referring to one version or all versions?
3. What about the apparent contradiction that I observed in my personal reading last week?
4. Can we know for sure that the Scriptures are without error?
5. Is it reasonable to believe that the Bible really has no errors?

Biblical inerrancy has been an important foundational truth of historical Christianity. Yet the last century has seen an all-out attempt to undermine this pillar of truth. This assault is often led

by religious scholars, whose opposing claims have been repeated over and over until a generation of Biblically illiterate people has accepted that they must be true. After all, since so many seminary professors question Biblical inerrancy, there must indeed be serious errors. Furthermore, if no authoritative moral truth exists, then we can live as we please with impunity. Most Americans today would say that the Bible has some errors. Yet if you ask them to give you an example, few could give you a reason for their belief other than hearsay. Therefore, the perception increases that the Bible is a book of fables with some history and morals thrown in. I remember a friend in public high school, 35 years ago, telling me, "I know the Bible has errors, but I still believe it." Well, what parts will such a person believe? And how long will he continue to say he believes it? A person may say that for a time, but sooner or later he will realize that such a philosophy is self-refuting and cannot form the basis of a life built on intellectual integrity. The fact that many do not know where they stand or have misguided opinions on this issue makes it important that we diligently study this topic and know where we stand so we can explain and defend this truth.

Evangelical scholar and author Harold Lindsell astutely observed, "Down the road, whether it takes five or fifty years, any institution that departs from belief in an inerrant Scripture will likewise depart from other fundamentals of the faith and at least cease to be evangelical in the historical meaning of that term."¹ I believe we are seeing and reaping the fruits of this departure from truth in our society today.

Most of us have at one time or another come across passages that at first glance appear to be contradictory, and it is okay to admit that. But where do we go from there? Do we immediately throw out the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, and often our faith in God along with it? Or do we step back and say, "There is something here that I do not understand. God, would you please reveal it to me?" When we are confronted with a possible contradiction, we should not minimize the problem; neither should we exaggerate it. We should instead seek to come to an

understanding which reconciles the passages. This is part of spiritual growth.

As we step back and look at the big picture, the case for Biblical inerrancy is strong; the Bible is solid, and we should not fear putting it to the test. In doing so, we must realize, of course, that we are fallible human beings doing the evaluating – therefore we may be in error; but God is the source of all truth.

When we speak of Biblical inerrancy, we are saying that the Bible is without error and that all God taught and wrote through the Biblical writers is true. In other words, the Bible does not conflict with reality, but rather it explains reality. Neither does it conflict with the will of God, but it reveals the will of God. This does not mean that as fallible humans we will never misunderstand the truth. Nor does it mean that the Scriptures are exhaustive. But it does mean that the Bible is supremely authoritative and completely trustworthy.

“Infallibility” is a word related to inerrancy. Some folks have made a distinction between the two words to say that the Bible is infallible but not inerrant. By this they mean that as a guide, it is fully trustworthy when it comes to matters of faith, morals, and life; and while it will not lead you astray, it could have some errors within its pages. On the surface, that may sound like a noble and reasonable compromise. But could we really trust a God Who cannot write or communicate without error? If so, how far would we trust Him? It is unthinkable and logically implausible that an all-knowing and all-powerful God would communicate in an inconsistent and uncertain manner. Furthermore, if there is error, who decides what is error and what is truth? To say that the Bible is infallible but not inerrant brings God and His Word down to the level of man, because it is now up to man to decide what is truth and what may be error. This is an attractive option to many but has led to the present state of confusion where God becomes what we want Him to be.

A second word related to this subject is “inspiration.” 2

Timothy 3:16 tells us that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The word “inspiration” literally means “God-breathed,” so this verse tells us that God is the Author of all Scripture. Since God is the source of His written Word, the truth of inspiration should again bring us to the logical conclusion that, because God is perfect, His Word is also without error.

I. Can Biblical Inerrancy be Proven?

How do we prove the inerrancy of the Bible? Can we prove Biblical inerrancy? Some have tried to present proof for every claim the Bible makes. But since there are an expansive number of claims in Scripture and each argument used to support a given claim would then need additional sub-arguments of support, any thinking person will quickly realize that this is an impossible task. In seeking to defend every detail of Scripture, some people have succumbed to unscholarly exposition to resolve apparent inconsistencies. This can take the form of:

- 1) stretching the meaning of words in a way that is unwarranted.
- 2) harmonizing passages in an implausible manner.
- 3) theorizing guesses about textual corruption.
- 4) twisting documented history to make it fit a desired outcome.

These are traps that need to be avoided in order to maintain intellectual honesty. Furthermore, trying to prove every claim the Bible makes can easily cause a person to develop a theology that is preoccupied with peripheral details rather than drawing us to the Bible's focal center, the Lord Jesus. We will look at some arguments that make the case for Biblical inerrancy, but this approach cannot be exhaustive so as to prove to an unbeliever with 100% absolute certainty that the Bible is inerrant. Still, this is the same way we operate in all other areas of life. Suppose we would not travel unless we were 100% certain we would arrive at our destination. We simply would never leave home! Many things could happen along the way: a car accident, an earthquake,

or a heart attack. Yet we move out in faith based on the high probability that we will safely arrive at our destination. The lack of 100% certainty does not keep us at home. Those who oppose the Scriptures are often critical of anything less than absolute certainty in this matter, yet they do not apply this bar to any other area of life.

As we approach the subject of Biblical inerrancy, a high standard of proof is needed, but not an unreasonable one. No atheist can be 100% certain that “there is no God.” In fact, denying God's existence necessitates admitting the possibility that He does exist. However, those who are open to truth will recognize that the great body of available evidence places the proposition that the Bible is inerrant as not only reasonable but probable. When a person becomes a Christian, the assurance of the internal witness of God becomes a reality in our lives, so we then know it is true, just as surely as we know that we exist.

When considering the basis for Biblical inerrancy, one question that must be considered is who carries the burden of proof: those who affirm inerrancy or those who claim there are errors within the Bible? Since inerrancy is a negative claim that “the Bible is without error,” and the critic makes a positive claim that “the Bible has error,” it is up to the critic to make a case for the affirmative and prove there are errors, not the other way around. The believer is justified in holding to inerrancy until an error is proven. The Bible has been around for thousands of years. It has been read and critiqued far more than any other book this world has ever known. Yet every criticism raised thus far has been answered. Demonstration of a Biblical error simply has not happened.

II. What are Some Challenges to the Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy?

One approach to studying the early Biblical texts is referred to as “Textual” or “Lower” criticism. This study concerns itself with the identification and removal of transcription errors in the

text, such as misspelled words or words copied twice. Another approach is called “Historical” or “Higher” criticism. This study seeks to determine the purpose and meaning of the authors in light of historical evidence based on the context in which a work was written. This includes facts about the author's life, as well as the historical and social circumstances of the time.

When using these approaches, it is important to understand that a person's presuppositions in approaching the Bible make a dramatic difference in the conclusions that are drawn. For example, knowing about the author's life, his surroundings, and his social circumstances can be valuable in understanding Scripture. However, much of today's historical criticism assumes that we must start with the secular world as a norm for society and the basis for deciding what happened in the past. The Bible is viewed as just another piece of literature, and no attempt is made to use Scripture to interpret Scripture, since any of the writers could be in error. With this backdrop, only Scriptural statements that can be confirmed by secular documents are accepted as truth. The bottom line is that only what can be “reasoned out” by man will be accepted. With this approach, man’s limited understanding, instead of God’s divine wisdom and ability, becomes the basis of interpretation, leading to misinterpretation.

Scholars who view the secular world as the norm usually have one or more of the following presuppositions:

- Miracles do not occur. Since they do not acknowledge miracles today, the assumption is that neither did they occur in previous generations.
- Biblical material likely includes internal contradictions. Apparent contradictions are probably real contradictions.
- Genuine prophecies do not occur. Since man cannot foretell the future, neither could the prophets describe future events to come. This means that all recorded events were written after the event actually occurred.

As an example, consider the book of Isaiah. Who wrote it?

Isaiah 1:1 clearly tells us:

*“The vision of **Isaiah the son of Amoz**, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.”*

This verse places Isaiah's call of God about the year King Uzziah died, or about 740 BC. Yet Isaiah clearly prophesied events well beyond his lifetime. He told Hezekiah in Isaiah 39:6:

*“Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to **Babylon**: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.”*

Isaiah prophesied that Babylon would take Judah captive. But this didn't occur until 100-150 years later. He then looked further into the future beyond the captivity to the return and rebuilding of the temple. In the latter half of the book, Isaiah speaks of the Lord:

“That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid” (Isaiah 44:28).

Cyrus' proclamation occurred more than 200 years after King Uzziah died and well after Isaiah died. None of us can foretell the name of the President of the United States 200 years from now, so the skeptic declares that this portion of Isaiah had to be written after the fact by another “Isaiah.” But even that wasn't all. Isaiah looked forward 700 years to accurately prophesy the virgin birth of the Messiah (Isaiah 7:14) and the great suffering and disfiguration He would endure on the cross (Isaiah 53). In the mind of the skeptic, it is impossible that a single Isaiah could have known and written these things! There had to be at least two and probably three Isaiahs over the course of centuries who wrote various sections of this book!

Yet for 2,500 years, no one doubted that one Isaiah, the son of Amos, wrote this book. The writers of the Septuagint didn't question the single author. But since the late 1800's, the theory of multiple writers has become more and more vocal, until today, this is the common teaching in many seminaries.

Let's suppose that the skeptics are wrong, and the author of Scripture is God, and we can therefore use the Bible to comment on itself. Who did the New Testament writers think wrote Isaiah? Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul all quote Isaiah the prophet. Let's consider only one reference in John 12:38-41.

*“That the saying of **Esaiias the prophet** might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? [Quote from Isaiah 53:1]*

*“Therefore they could not believe, because that **Esaiias said again**, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. [Quote from Isaiah 6:9-10]*

“These things said Esaiias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

[notes and emphasis added]

Did John think there were two or three authors of Isaiah? Here verse 40 quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 from the first part of the book of Isaiah, while verse 38 quotes from the second part of Isaiah (53:1). John links them by saying in verse 39, “Isaiah said again.” These are sections of Isaiah that historical critics say were written by different men. Yet if the same writer did not write chapter 6 and chapter 53, then John was mistaken, and the New Testament must also be in error!

Let's take a step back and consider what we know:

1) Isaiah claimed to write the book named after him.

- 2) John and the New Testament writers believed one Isaiah wrote the book.
- 3) Jesus quoted from the book, attributing the book to Isaiah without any kind of distinction between the various sections of the book. (Matthew 13:14, 15:7; Mark 7:6; Luke 4:17-19)
- 4) External evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls of the 2nd century B.C. links the various sections of Isaiah as one unit, not as distinct sections.
- 5) Translators from AD 200 believed one Isaiah wrote this book.
- 6) Bible teachers and believers up until recent times believed one Isaiah wrote this book.

So the question becomes, “Are we going to follow this body of evidence to its logical conclusion that Isaiah was written by one author? Or are we going to conclude that we have suddenly become enlightened and that Jesus and the Bible writers either were deceived or perhaps conspired to deceive others?”

Let's consider just one more example of how secular-based assumptions of the Word distort conclusions. In Numbers 25, we have an account of Israel committing harlotry with the daughters of Moab (Numbers 25:1). The judgment of God brought a plague against Israel, and verse 9 says, “And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.” The Apostle Paul refers to that account in 1 Corinthians 10, and he concludes in verse 8, “Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.” We have an apparent discrepancy. What do we do with this? Did Paul have a slip-of-the-mind that introduced error into the Scriptures as some scholars have suggested? What about the possibility that 23,000 fell one day and a thousand died the next day from the plague? Or perhaps there is a different explanation that better supports the inerrancy of Scripture. When we are perplexed by an apparent contradiction of Scripture, we must consider that we may simply have misunderstood the passage. It is unwarranted to assume that God directed or permitted error in His Word.

If we consider using higher criticism, it is important to remember that approaching the Word with presuppositions and distorted ideas will clearly yield false renditions of the truth. Based on the authority and unity of an omniscient God, Scripture must be viewed as its own best interpreter.

III. What Constitutes a Contradiction or an Error?

The charge is often given that the Bible is full of contradictions. Certainly an actual contradiction would disprove the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. For example, if Scripture said that Jesus was born in both Nazareth and Bethlehem, that would be a contradiction and would discredit both the book and the author. But many claims of contradiction in the Bible are easily shown to not be contradictions at all.

When facing an apparent contradiction, several things need to be kept in mind. For example, two statements may differ from each other without being contradictory. Consider the case of the blind men at Jericho. Matthew relates how two blind men met Jesus (Matthew 20:30), while both Mark and Luke mention only one (Mark 10:51, Luke 18:35). Similar examples can be found in the descriptions of events surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection. These statements show different aspects of the same event but are not contradictory. We understand how this works in real life. If I told you I saw a nice buck this morning, and then I told someone else that I saw a herd of deer this morning, that would not necessarily be contradictory. I may have had reason for the emphasis I was giving at separate times. Many times, people suppose they found errors when in reality they have not correctly read and understood the passage.

Sometimes two passages appear to be contradictory because the translation is not as accurate as it could be. Translation is often a difficult task. For example, in the account of Paul's conversion in Acts 9:7, we read, "The men which journeyed with him stood speechless, **hearing a voice**, but seeing no man." Acts 22:9 reads, "And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and

were afraid; but they **heard not the voice** of him that spake to me” [emphasis added].

These statements seem contradictory. Did Paul’s companions hear a voice or not? However, knowledge of Greek solves this difficulty. Greek scholar W. F. Arndt explains that “The construction of the verb ‘to hear’ (*akouo*) is not the same in both accounts. In Acts 9:7 it is used with the genitive, in Acts 22:9 with the accusative. The construction with the genitive simply expresses that something is being heard or that certain sounds reach the ear; nothing is indicated as to whether a person understands what he hears or not. The construction with the accusative, however, describes a hearing which includes mental apprehension of the message spoken. From this it becomes evident that the two passages are not contradictory. Acts 22:9 does not deny that the associates of Paul heard certain sounds; it simply declares that they did not hear in such a way as to understand what was being said. Our English idiom in this case simply is not so expressive as the Greek.”²

Knowledge of the original languages of the Bible can immediately solve many difficulties. All languages have their peculiarities that make them difficult to translate into English or another language. Hebrew and Greek are no exception.

A few more things that should be considered before claiming to find an error:

- The authors used the language of the day in which they lived. They used words and style appropriate for the type of literature they were writing. When we read a book or a magazine, we properly recognize the differences between poetry and prose or figures of speech and literal facts. We need to recognize the same in the Scriptures and allow Biblical authors this freedom as well. Poetry should be read as poetry, proverbs as proverbs, and prophecy as prophecy. This does not affect inerrancy.
- Biblical authors sometimes used round numbers as we do. If I asked you, “What is the national debt?” or “What is the

world's population?" you would likely respond with "\$16 trillion" and "7 billion people." We don't view these numbers as being in error. We should recognize in Scripture when numbers are rounded and when they are precise.

- The writers sometimes used the language of appearance as we do. We say the "sun rises," when it really doesn't. We say "time flies." Shouldn't Bible writers be able to speak of trees of the field that "clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12), or the "four corners of the earth" (Revelation 7:1)? We recognize what is being said and would certainly not characterize this as error in today's literature.
- At various times the New Testament cites ideas and passages from the Old Testament, and the reference is not an exact quote. This may be due to Hebrew or Greek translation, or it may be a paraphrase of the original passage. Either way, this doesn't affect inerrancy.
- Biblical inerrancy holds that all the Bible **affirms** is true. It does not claim that all statements made by Biblical characters are true. For example, Potiphar's wife, speaking of Joseph, exclaims in Genesis 39:14, "See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice." This was obviously a lie. In the book of Job, Job's friends made many statements after which God told Eliphaz (Job 42:7), "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job has." Untrue statements by Biblical characters are recorded by the Bible but not affirmed by it. The Bible is accurately true to life.
- We should also realize that the Bible does not claim to be exhaustive. It doesn't speak directly about computers or space travel, but this omission is again not harmful to the claim of inerrancy.

When there is a plausible explanation for a Biblical difficulty, it is unreasonable to state that the passage contains a contradiction or error.

IV. In Defense of Inerrancy

The Bible claims to be God's Word, and it claims to be God-breathed. But of course, that will not be very convincing to the skeptic. I once had an unbelieving co-worker tell me that he could write a book that claims to be God's Word. And of course, he could. People have written books and falsely made such claims. As we stated earlier, we will be unable to prove 100% to everyone's satisfaction that the Bible is inerrant. Still, there are many things we should consider that will boost our confidence and make inerrancy the only reasonable conclusion.

A. Appeal to Endurance

No other book has been so strongly opposed and yet so resilient as the Scriptures. In AD 303, the Roman Emperor Diocletian issued a royal edict demanding that every copy of the Bible be surrendered and destroyed by fire. Thousands of early copies were burned, and perhaps some of the original letters were among them. The French humanist Voltaire once declared, "Another century and there will not be a Bible on the earth." Joseph Stalin declared a "BAN THE BIBLE" purge in the USSR. Yet the Scriptures still survive today. Faithful scribes have very carefully hand-copied the Scriptures throughout the centuries. Others have carefully translated those Scriptures into English and many other languages. No other book has nearly as many manuscripts and fragments for collaborative comparison.

Since these manuscripts were painstakingly copied and translated, the question must be asked whether these copies were inspired just like the original copies. Were the copies God-breathed and inerrant?

It would be wrong to assume that every copy of the Bible is inerrant or that every copyist and translator was inspired. God did not promise that. But in spite of all the enemies who opposed it, He has preserved His written Word. God did not do this by inspiring each copyist or by burning every bad copy, but rather by

giving us such a great witness (or number) of copies with so little alterations that we can trust with great confidence that our Bibles very closely match the original text. Textual criticism may find a few words or letters that were copied twice, or misspelled, or perhaps missed. But the original words of the Bible can be determined with a very high degree of certainty. Comparing manuscript with manuscript, the differences are so small that the original text can usually be easily discerned. Of the few cases where the original may be uncertain, none affect any primary doctrine or belief.

So inerrancy is best understood as the Bible contains no error in the original writings. Copies or translations may have small textual errors. But this doesn't affect the reliability, usability, or clarity of our Bibles today. Some have argued that it is impossible or useless to claim the original text is inerrant since we don't have the original. But that is like saying that we will not trust the measurement of a scale without seeing the international kilogram standard placed on it. Just as a scale is calibrated with an accurate representation of the true standard, the Scriptures today are sufficiently accurate replications of the original that we can place our full trust in them. No other book has endured the millennia like the Scriptures.

B. Appeal to Jesus

Anyone who claims to follow Jesus should seek to have the same understanding of Scripture that He had. So how did Jesus view the Scriptures? We will consider only a few examples:

- Jesus clearly believed in the truthfulness and historical reliability of even the most disputed parts of the Old Testament.
 - He believed in the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 & 2. Matthew 19:4, “Have you not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female?”
 - He believed that Noah was a real person, and the global flood was a historical event. Matthew

24:37, “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

- He regarded the account of Jonah and the great fish to be a great historical event. Matthew 12:40, “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”
- Jesus considered not only the teachings of Scripture to be without error, He considered the very words and letters to be verbally inspired as well. Matthew 5:18, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot and one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” A tittle is a small accent over a letter, like the dot on an “i.” Of course the punctuation of the original writings was much different than ours, but Jesus understood the smallest parts of the Scriptures to be verbally inspired.
- Jesus held to the inspiration of even the word tense. In Matthew 22:23-33, Jesus contended with the Sadducees and reminded them of God's words to Moses that “I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” This was stated after these patriarchs had died, and yet “I AM” is present tense, indicating they were still alive. His conclusion in verse 32 is that “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” In other words, since Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still living, there had to be a resurrection. This entire argument was made, based on the tense of the verb “I AM.”

Jesus understood the Scriptures to be authoritative and applicable to every area of life. He used them in argument and believed them to be accurate in every way. Even cults who consider Jesus to be a “good teacher” should trust His understanding of the nature of the Scriptures; for us who take His Name as Christians, this should be even more so.

C. Appeal to the Apostles and Early Church

What did the Apostles and early Church teach and believe about the Scriptures?

- Paul regarded the serpent's deception of Eve to be a historical event. "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).
- Peter affirmed his belief in historical Lot and the destruction of Sodom (2 Peter 2:6-7).
- The early church trusted the account of the Scriptures even more than they trusted the apostles themselves. In Acts 17:11 we read, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."
- Many references (Acts 1:20, 13:33, 15:15, 23:5, 17:2, 18:24, 18:28, etc.) show us that the apostles understood the Scriptures to be normative for life and to be free from the stain of error.
- The history of the church shows a similar trend:
 - Augustine: "no author in these books made any error" (Letters of Augustine, Letter 82, 3).
 - The Reformation was based on the principle of "Sola Scriptura," which assumes the validity of the Biblical text.

Throughout church history, belief in the accuracy of Scripture has been maintained from the time of the writers through centuries of believers that followed.

D. Appeal to Unity

Suppose ten preachers were assigned the task of preparing a message on the work of the Holy Spirit or the destiny of the unbeliever. How similar would these presentations be? Now compare these messages with those of a scribe 500 years earlier, a

herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit 350 years before that, a king 200 years still earlier, and a man who grew up in Pharaoh's household 500 years before even that. How likely is it that all these works would have a unified message? Even when people are of the same group, we often find reason to take issue with one another's views. But the unified message of redemption through the work of Jesus Christ extends seamlessly through the book.

Bible writers never criticized each other's writings, even when we might have expected them to do so. Paul rebuked Peter in Galatians 2:11 for his improper actions in showing partiality against the Gentiles, but Paul never rebuked Peter for what he wrote under inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We might expect Peter to seek revenge after his rebuke by being critical of Paul. Yet in 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter writes, "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles." Instead of criticizing, Peter recommended Paul's writings to any that would read.

The Bible was written over a period of about 1,500 years by more than forty different human authors. These authors came from a variety of backgrounds, including Joshua (a military general), Daniel (a prime minister), Peter (a fisherman), and Nehemiah (a cup-bearer). The Biblical writings were composed on three different continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe) and in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek). The authors came from various cultures and widely ranging degrees of education. They covered hundreds of subjects. And yet, the Bible has a unity that we likely would not find with ten present-day men in the same room! Surely this is evidence that the Bible is different from any other book.

E. Appeal to Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of non-perishable debris left behind by men of past ages which has survived the elements until our present day. These remains are uncovered and studied in

order to achieve a better understanding of ancient people and their practices. The Middle East is the subject of many archaeological excavations because of its continuous history through the ages. In the relatively recent past, archaeology has verified history contained in the Bible that was previously considered suspect or in error. For many years, Sodom and Gomorrah were considered mythological due to lack of external evidence. Yet recent excavations at Tell Mardikh, Syria, uncovered about 15,000 tablets that mention Sodom and Gomorrah.

Isaiah 20:1 speaks of Sargon, King of Assyria, who raided the Philistine city of Ashdod. Due to a lack of extra-Biblical evidence of Sargon's existence, scholars once believed that either Isaiah was mistaken or Sargon was an alternative name for another Assyrian king. The reason scholars did not find him in the Assyrian records at Nineveh is because Sargon had moved his capital from there to what is present day Khorsabad, Iraq. In 1842, however, Sargon II's palace was discovered, providing a lot of evidence and information about this king. Many examples exist where archeology verifies the accuracy of Biblical details previously thought by some to be erroneous. Like other cases for Biblical inerrancy, archaeology cannot prove the Bible is without error. It can, however, verify history and shed light on various events, thereby proving helpful in illustrating that many Biblical passages are historically accurate.

Miracles recorded in Scripture cannot be scientifically tested or repeated due to their nature, but persons, places, and events can be investigated historically. The findings of archaeology have verified historical points of the Biblical record many times over. New light is continually being shed on difficult portions of Scripture, and many so-called "errors" have disappeared with the new understanding. While not all Biblical difficulties and discrepancies have yet been cleared up, it is reasonable to believe that more knowledge of the Bible's past will serve to verify its inerrancy even more. As the Biblical writers are found to be correct in their historical picture, our confidence in Scripture

should be boosted, cautioning us against ruling out the Biblical record just because it seems to be out of the ordinary.

V. Conclusion

The Biblical concept of God is that He is an all-knowing, all-powerful Being who does not contradict Himself. A corollary is that His written Word, when properly understood, does not and will not contain any error. Whether it is concerning Christ, salvation, life, world history, or any other topic with which the Biblical text deals, putting our full faith in the inerrancy of the Bible is both reasonable and warranted. The Bible is worthy of our complete trust in all areas.

God has created us with an innate thirst for knowledge. While we must be careful that the drive for knowledge does not become a god unto itself, we should not be afraid to ask the difficult questions regarding the Word. Still, in spite of faithful study, there will be times when we have to say, “I don't know the answer to that question.”

When there are unanswered questions, how do we as an honest seeker of truth maintain genuine confidence in our claim of Biblical inerrancy? How do we affirm faith in God when our knowledge bank is still incomplete? First, our knowledge bank will always be incomplete. Simply put, time and sheer human frailty mean that we will never gain exhaustive knowledge of a subject. Secondly, while some choose to live their entire lives as skeptics, this is hardly a viable option for the believer. We draw firm conclusions about a whole host of uncertain things just to live through a single day. Furthermore, for the skeptic to claim that we know we cannot know is self-refuting.

The honest seeker who is willing to prayerfully weigh the evidence and follow wherever it leads will find the case for Biblical inerrancy to be not only reasonable, but also compelling. God has provided sufficient evidence for mankind to arrive at the truth and to know His will (John 6:45; 7:17; 8:32). As born-

again, Holy Spirit-filled Christians know, the end of our incessant pursuit of knowledge is not an ideology or an impersonal reality, but a Person – the Lord Jesus Christ. In Biblical terms, no pursuit of knowledge is ever complete without the discovery of Him who is the Truth and the Ultimate Reality (John 14:6).

We worship Jesus, not the Bible. Still, the Bible is invaluable in telling us about our Lord. Our commitment to its inerrancy is of utmost importance. A quote from J.I. Packer summarizes our options:

“The less reliability is ascribed to Scripture, the less precise becomes its authority, the more pluralistic becomes Christian theology, the smudgier becomes the believer’s vision of Christ and the less certain his faith, and the more problematical becomes the wisdom of God as communicator. Denying Biblical infallibility thus exchanges manageable problems in the text for unmanageable perplexities in theology and spiritual life.”³

Thankfully, any attempt to compromise the integrity of the sacred text is totally unnecessary. When difficulties arise, plausible explanations exist if we will study and apply honest, thorough evaluations of the available evidence. Biblical inerrancy is an essential doctrine that true believers and the Biblical Mennonite Alliance rightly hold high. This conviction leads us to study and love the Bible, and ultimately God Himself, in a greater way. Thank you, Lord, for your inerrant Holy Word!

¹ Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), pp. 120-121.

² W.F. Arndt, Does the Bible Contradict Itself (Concordia Publishing, 1976), pp. 13–14.

³ J.I. Packer, New Dictionary of Theology (IVP 1988), *Infallibility and Inerrancy of the Bible*.

Both Harold Lindsell and J.I. Packer were signers of the 1978 “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.” The Chicago Statement was designed to defend Biblical inerrancy, is available online, and is recommended for further study.