

## ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS & DIFFICULTIES IN THE BIBLE

Text: 2 Peter 3:15-16

INTRO: Enemies of the Bible have long insisted that the Bible is "filled with contradictions." If such is the case, then the Bible cannot be held as inspired or infallible.

If, on the other hand, the Bible is divinely inspired it cannot possibly contain actual contradictions in its teachings.

From the outset, the Bible student should be prepared to admit that there are at least a few passages that present difficulties, but they are not nearly so numerous as the Bible's enemies would have us believe.

In this lesson we will look at some of the difficulties & alleged contradictions & the solutions to the problems they introduce.

### I. AS IN ANY DOCUMENT OR SPEECH, PROBLEMS SOMETIMES STEM FROM THE NATURE OF HUMAN LANGUAGE.

- A. Most words can have more than one meaning.
- B. It is not unusual for some words to change in meaning over a long period of time. KJV: **let**, 2 Thess 2:7; **prevent**, 1 Thess 4:15; **by & by**, LK 21:9.
- C. Some words are spelled or pronounced like other words that are very different in meaning, sometimes leading to confusion or misunderstanding: **strait/straight**; **Nazarene/Nazarite**.
- D. The O.T. was written in Heb., the N.T. in Greek. Sometimes the translators had difficulty putting the original thoughts into our lang. Certain passages, esp. songs & poems, lose some of their beauty & "feel" in translation. Psa 119 acrostic.
- E. For these & similar reasons Bible students should not lose heart when they run into difficulty. Examine the texts carefully & in most cases there is a relatively simple solution.

### II. SOME DIFFICULTIES ARE CAUSED BY FAILURE TO TAKE NOTE OF THE SPEAKER, WRITER, AUDIENCE, ETC.

The inspired writers were accurate, but they sometimes reported the words of Satan, false teachers, etc.

In the book of Job there are 8 characters: God, Satan, Job, his 4 friends & the writer. Only God & the inspired writer were correct in all that they said. What Satan said was not true. Job & all his friends were rebuked for certain things they said, 38:2; 42:7. If something stated by Job or one of his friends were to be found to conflict with some plain Bible teaching, this is no serious problem. It is not at all unusual for uninspired speakers to say something that contradicts the teachings of the Bible.

The Bible quotes from the devil, the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, evil rulers, false teachers, even from the fool who said in his heart "There is no God." That fool really said it. But he was wrong when he said it.

### III. SOME ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS STEM FROM DIFFERING CONDITIONS AT THE TIME CERTAIN THINGS WERE RECORDED.

Gen. 1:31, God saw that everything was good.

Gen. 6:6, it repented the Lord that He had made man.

1500 years had passed & conditions had changed drastically. Anyone who would cite this as a contradiction is either extremely ignorant or downright dishonest. The same principle will clear up many other problems. David a man after God's own heart, etc.

### IV. SOME DIFFICULTIES ARISE FROM FAILING TO CONSIDER THE PURPOSE OF THE WRITER/SPEAKER IN MAKING A CERTAIN STATEMENT.

The writer of Ecclesiastes is viewing man from the standpoint of life under the sun. He makes a number of statements that have been interpreted to teach that man's spirit is unconscious in the grave after death. If he had taught such, there would be a real contradiction between what he taught & what Jesus taught

in Luke 16. But the writer of Eccl. is not discussing the afterlife. He is only writing about life under the sun. When man dies, he has no more life under the sun--but this certainly does not rule life beyond the sun!

In parables it is important to note the purpose of what is being compared. We will be as angels, the kingdom is like a net, a mustard seed, a man seeking pearls, etc. Alike in what way???

V. SOME DIFFICULTIES ARISE FROM DIFFERENT WRITERS USING DIFFERENT METHODS OF ARRANGEMENT. Some wrote primarily in chronological order. Others arranged their materials more by subject. Many writers used a combination of both methods.

Matthew, Mark & Luke all recorded that immediately after Jesus' baptism, He went into the wilderness & was tempted for 40 days. **John 1:29-36** presents a problem.

NOTE: The events of JN1:35 do not take place the next day after Jesus' baptism, but the next day after He came to John in vs 29. He had already been baptized sometime previous to this.

It is also a serious mistake to assume that the books are arranged in chronological order. Most of them are not.

VI. SOME PROBLEMS ARISE FROM DIFFERENT METHODS OF COUNTING TIME.

Mark 15:25 says Jesus was crucified at the 3rd hour. John 19:14 says the trial was still going on about the 6th hour.

NOTE: Mark evidently used the Jewish mode of reckoning. The 3rd hour would be 9 A.M. John used the Roman method. The 6th hour was 6 A.M. Thus the trial was going on at 6 A.M. and the crucifixion began at 9 A.M.

VII. SOME ARE CONFUSED BY THE FACT THAT MANY BIBLE CHARACTERS HAVE MORE THAN ONE NAME, OR THAT SEVERAL DIFFERENT PERSONS BEAR THE SAME NAME.

Simon, Simeon, Simon Peter, Simon Bar-Jona, Cephus

There were also other men named Simon: the leper, the tanner, the Zealot, a brother of Jesus, the father of Judas Iscariot, etc.

One confusing factor is that in the KJV many O.T. characters' names, for some reason, are not spelled the same way when they are mentioned in the N.T. Noah becomes Noe, Elijah becomes Elias, Joshua becomes Jesus [Acts 7:45; Heb 4:8]. Newer translations have corrected these problems.

VIII. THERE ARE NUMEROUS FIGURES OF SPEECH IN THE BIBLE WHICH, IF TAKEN LITERALLY, WOULD PRESENT A DIFFICULTY. Many prophecies & psalms use highly colorful, figurative expressions: God is a rock, a fortress, a shield & buckler, a strong tower, etc. Trees clap their hands, mountains skip like lambs, etc. This is figurative language!

IX. NOT ALL BIBLICAL WRITERS WERE LIVING UNDER THE SAME SYSTEM OF LAW. What was commanded during the patriarchal or Mosaical ages does not apply to Christians & vice versa. Animal sacrifices, Sabbath-keeping, tithing, etc. are part of the O.T. system & do not apply to us. Baptism is part of the N.T. & was not required in earlier ages.

X. SOME PROBLEMS ARISE BECAUSE PEOPLE MISTAKE SIMILAR EVENTS FOR CONTRADICTORY ACCOUNTS OF THE SAME EVENT.

A. Abraham twice lied about Sarah being his wife, Gen 12; 20. Later his son Isaac did similarly, Gen 26. Enemies of the Bible suggest that these are 3 contradictory accounts of the same event.

B. Jesus made some His statements on more than one occasion just as any teacher or preacher is likely to do. The fact that Matthew records a statement from the Sermon on the Mount & Luke records a like statement in some other speech does not constitute a contradiction, but simply a record that He said some things more than

once.

- C. There are numerous similar matters: the feeding of the 5,000 & the feeding of the 4,000, etc.

XI. SOME PROBLEMS ARISE BECAUSE 2 OR MORE WRITERS RECORD THE SAME EVENT & ONE RECORDS DETAILS THE OTHER DID NOT MENTION.

- A. Several years ago I read where a modernistic preacher insisted that since Mark & John did not mention the virgin birth, they did not believe in it.
- B. Sometimes one account of the gospel may tell us of 2 beggars while another may mention only one of them.
- C. The writers did not attempt to mention every event, every miracle or every conversation Jesus engaged in.  
John 20:30-31; 21:25

XII. FINALLY, INSIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS MAY ARISE IN CERTAIN NUMBERS RECORDED IN SOME O.T. PASSAGES. There are a few cases in the books of Kings & Chronicles where some numbers are in question & where it is possible some ancient scribe may have made a numerical error in the numbers of horses employed in a certain battle or the exact of some king when he began to reign, etc. Such matters do not affect our salvation, or would they have affected the salvation of those who lived under the law. On top of that, the parallel account will almost always make clear what the reading was in the original manuscript.

CONCLUSION: The Bible, the inspired word of God stands unchanged for nearly 2,000 years. Enemies have blasted it, friends have neglected & abused it, but still it stands. Problems can be solved by carefully reading the context, & the parallel accounts. Explain the obscure in the light of the plain, use good common sense. These simple suggestions will solve 95% of the problems you will encounter. In ages past men with minds of genius have misused those minds by aligning themselves against God's word: Robert Ingersoll, Robert Owen,

Voltaire. Their books gather dust on library shelves while the Bible continues to outsell every other book in the world.

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door  
And heard the anvil ring the vespers chime.  
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor  
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,  
"To wear and batter all those hammers so?"  
"Just one," he said; then with a twinkling eye,  
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's word  
For ages skeptics' blows have beat upon,  
Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard  
The anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone!

La Porte, TX, August 19, 1979

La Porte, TX, May 29, 1983

Exton, PA, November 24, 1985

Jonestown, TX, June 19, 1988 (meeting)

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, March 2, 1997

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, October 15, 2000

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, July 17, 2005