

## ALLEGED BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS

### INTRODUCTION:

SCRIPTURE: (2 Pet 3:15-16) 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; {16} As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

A. There may be things we cannot explain or do not understand that are not contradictions.

B. Difficulties arise from the nature of the truths revealed. Some things are hard to understand.

C. The nature of God presents some difficulty. Our finite minds can never understand all about God. We are to understand that which He has revealed. (Deu 29:29) The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

D. The corruption of man causes some difficulties. Whether deliberately or not man combines his own sinful thoughts with the Bible and thus he cannot see clearly the truth.

### I. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM A MISINTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE.

A. (Gen 1:7) “And God made the **firmament**, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.”

The Hebrew word “raqia” means an expanse, and is not a reference to something ‘firm’ or ‘hard’ as the English “firmament” might seem to suggest.

B. (Mat 2:16) “Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the **coasts** thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.”

As we use the word ‘coasts’ today there is no way that this statement could be true since Bethlehem is miles from the sea, but the word ‘coasts’ can also refer to the region surrounding an area.

### II. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM DIFFERENCES OF AUTHORSHIP.

A. (Gen 2:17) “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen 3:4) “. . . Ye shall not surely die.”

There is no contradiction here even though opposite statements are made. The first was from God and the second was spoken by Satan.

B. Ask the clarifying questions before accepting any statement in scripture.

1. Who made the statement?

2. To whom was it made?

3. Why was it made?

4. Was this under the Old or New Testament?

5. Is the writer endorsing the statement or merely narrating it?

### III. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM THINGS OCCURRING AT DIFFERENT TIMES.

A. The Bible was written over a time period of hundreds of years. Circumstances can change drastically during that time frame.

B. God may say two opposite statements at two separate times and not be guilty of contradiction.

1. (Gen 1:31) And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

2. (Gen 6:6) And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

### IV. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM DIFFERENT TOPICS OR OBJECTS BEING ADDRESSED.

A. We must understand what the author was speaking of and not what we think of when the same statement is made to us.

B. Is man mortal or immortal? The Bible teaches both, but does not contradict itself. Our bodies are mortal, but

our spirit is immortal.

#### V. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM DIFFERING METHODS OF ARRANGEMENT AND/OR ABSENCE OF CERTAIN EVENTS.

A. It is not the purpose of every writer to give every detail of all the events that occurred.

1. (John 21:25) And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

2. The group of people being written to makes certain things necessary or useless.

a. Matthew in writing to the Jews used large amounts of prophecy.

b. Luke in writing to a gentile audience had no reason to dwell on Jewish prophecy.

B. An author may have arranged events chronologically, according to topic, in order of importance, etc. there is no discrepancy in these different forms of arrangement.

C. A writer may use the current expression for something that is technically inaccurate without being in contradiction with the truth.

1. We say the sun rose this morning even though that is not factual, but we don't accuse one another of lying or being mistaken.

2. The Bible may speak of the four corners of the earth without being accused of the falsehood of a flat earth.

3. Numbers may be rounded or approximated.

4. All of these are allowed in other writings without question, why is God not allowed to use these same common tools?

#### VI. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM DIFFERENCES IN CALCULATING TIMES AND DATES.

A. A family Bible of Washington says he was born on 2-11-1732, while a biography says he was born on 2-22-1732. The two authors used two different ways of figuring the date. Washington certainly was not born twice.

B. We have several different methods of measuring the temperature, time, and distances. There were multiple ways of calculating things in Bible times as well.

C. In Gen. 5 we see the idea of counting a part of a year as a whole just as we do today. Otherwise, we have a strange occurrence wherein every man listed died on his birthday.

#### VII. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM MISTAKES IN THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OTHER THAN THE BIBLE.

A. The case of Daniel and Belshazar is a case of historians claiming a Biblical discrepancy before all of the facts were in.

B. Luke proclaims Cyrenius as governor of Syria when Jesus was born. He was charged with an error by some until research confirmed that Cyrenius was governor on two occasions.

#### VIII. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM IGNORANCE OF THE FACTS.

A. A statement made does not negate other statements made in other places.

1. Jesus was a man. Jesus was a Jew. These two statements can both be true.

2. We are saved by grace. We are saved by faith. Baptism saves us. All of these can be true as long as there is no statement that says we are saved ONLY by one of them.

B. If I am standing on one side of the street and you are on the other side of the street, and we are facing each other, the when a car comes by I may say it came from the left and you say it came from the right and both of us would be right.

#### IX. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM MULTIPLE WORDS FOR THE SAME PERSON OR OBJECT AND THE USE OF ONE WORD WITH MULTIPLE, EVEN OPPOSITE MEANINGS.

A. Many languages use a variety of words to describe the same object.

1. We have rock, stone, boulder or coke, pop, soda.

2. The apostle, Peter is known as: Simon, Simeon, Peter, Cephas, Simon Peter, Simon Bar-Jona, and

Simon son of Jonas, but he was only one person.

B. Sometimes names change. Leningrad, Russia was at one time Petrograd and at another time St. Petersburg.

C. Some words have multiple meanings

1. In our common usage 'with' can mean against as in 'We fought with Germany in WWII.' 'With' can also mean alongside as in the statement 'We fought with England in WWII.' If we had no knowledge of the circumstances of WWII we would have difficulty understanding these two statements properly.

2. The Hebrew word 'barak' can mean either to bless or to curse. We have to understand the context to know which is meant.

3. The word 'let' is used in scripture to mean both 'allow' and 'hinder'.

a. (Rom 3:4) "God forbid: yea, **LET** God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

b. (Rom 1:13) "Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was **LET** hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles."

4. We sometimes have only one English word for a multiple of Greek words. For example: 'Love' covers 'agape', 'phileo', 'eros', and 'sturgae'.

D. Some words in our language have changed meanings.

1. This is not a problem with God, but with man. We need to continually update our translations so that there is no confusion.

2. Words in the KJV are sometimes troublesome for this very reason.

a. (Psa 119:147-148) I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word. {148} Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

b. (Amos 9:10) All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

c. (1 Th 4:15) For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

d. Each of these uses a word common to us, but only Amos uses it in the way we understand it today. David means 'anticipate' when he uses it and Paul means 'precede'. We must be careful.

## X. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM MISUNDERSTANDING FIGURES OF SPEECH AND/OR SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE.

A. Metaphors, similes, hyperboles, idioms, etc. are not meant to be taken literally.

1. David describes God as a rock, as having wings and feathers, and with many other physical characteristics which if taken literally would paint a most disturbing picture. We must realize that God is a spirit.

2. John the baptizer calls Herod a fox, but we know Herod was a man.

3. We say, 'it will cost you an arm and a leg', but if anything really did cost us an arm and a leg would we buy it?

B. The descriptions of visions and dreams in scripture must also be understood to be symbolic of something real and not literally real in itself.

1. Joseph and Pharoah

2. Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar

3. John and Revelation

## XI. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM ERRORS IN MANUSCRIPTS OR TRANSLATIONS.

A. Even the most carefully printed books have errors. Even with our computers and spell (oops! Didn't catch that one.) spell checkers and printing presses we still have errors in every book that comes out.

B. The multitude of manuscripts that we have of the Bible help to make it possible for us to recognize and avoid any mistakes in a single or small group of manuscripts.

C. We must have faith in God that He has kept his word pure enough that we can follow it to heaven. The minute number of mistakes in the manuscripts do not affect the gospel.

## XII. SOME ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES RESULT FROM THE IMAGINATION OF THE CRITIC.

A. Most critics seem to have the attitude; “I will either find a discrepancy or I will make one.”

B. “A Swedish traveller, in looking through Voltaire’s library, found Calmet’s Commentary, with slips of paper inserted on which the difficulties noticed by Calmet were set down, without a word about the solutions which were given by him. ‘This’ adds the Swede, who was otherwise a great admirer of Voltaire, ‘was not honorable.’”

### Conclusion

A. John said if all was written the world couldn’t hold the books. The Bible’s purpose is to tell the story of salvation, not to be a history, geography, math, or science book. When it does make reference to the previous it does so accurately, but at the same time takes the liberties that any book might take with such.

B. (Jude 1:3) “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” The Bible is a major building block of our faith and we must defend it in order to contend for the faith.