

ALLEGED BIBLE DISCREPANCIES

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ALLEGED BIBLE DISCREPANCIES

Critics claim the Bible is filled with errors. Some claim there are hundreds of errors. Critics know well alleged discrepancies in their efforts to discredit the Bible. In the mind of the critic, a discrepancy is all the evidence needed to deny the inspiration of the Bible. The truth is that there are no errors in the Bible, only difficulties, but the sad reality is that many Christians are not always ready to give an answer, and therefore they are not ready to refute critics. The Bible is the inspired word of God, and any alleged numerical, historical, scientific, or moral discrepancies do not contradict the doctrine of inspiration.

A belief in the doctrine of inspiration is vital for any follower of Christ. It is vital because the scriptures themselves testify to being inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16), God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and those that question inspiration put their own mind at a higher standard of truth than God's Word. Inspiration means that the Holy Spirit spoke to human authors in a supernatural way, and they recorded what God desired to communicate because God used them as agents to communicate his message.¹ Since the original inspired autographs were lost, all that is available today are copies of these autographs.² Those that believe in the doctrine of inspiration will consider seriously the charge in Titus 1:9 to

¹ Stanley J. Grenz and David Guretzki. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 66-67.

² Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Handbook* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 2005), 10.

refute the critic.

Numerical Discrepancies

The alleged numerical discrepancy of Solomon's stalls in 1 Kings 4:26 and 2 Chronicles 9:25 needs to be explained. In the 1 Kings account the number of stalls is 40,000, while in the 2 Chronicles account the number is 4,000. Dennis McKinsey argues against the most obvious solution to the problem of a copyist error. McKinsey claims that an assumption of a copyist error is nothing but that. McKinsey believes that the contradictions in the Bible create doctrinal difficulties. He also argues that anyone assuming copyist error can only base his conclusions on mere speculation because he himself has not seen the original manuscripts.³ However, the argument against this critic and in favor of a copyist error is not based on assumption or wild speculation as the critic charges, but on the known problems with copyists' transmission of numerical abbreviations. Solomon had 1,400 chariots (2 Chronicles 1:14) and 4,000 horses would be more suitable given that two horses would be in a chariot and one would be in reserve.⁴ Another commentator argues that Solomon would have disobeyed Deuteronomy 17:16 if he had so many horses.⁵ So clearly translations that read 40,000 stalls in 1 Kings 4:26 really are translating from a manuscript with copyist errors. Only the NIV correctly records the number of stalls as 4,000. Critics also attack the discrepancy

³ Dennis C. McKinsey, *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1995), 72.

⁴ R. D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, *1 Kings*, vol. 4 of *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 54.

⁵ Iain W. Provan, *1 & 2 Kings*, vol. 7 of *New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 59.

between the number of wives of Solomon.⁶

Scientific Discrepancies

Among modern scientific discoveries, critics attack the possibility of the worldwide flood. B. Vawter argues that the flood account was scientifically impossible, and the author of the flood narrative was only interested in transmitting a popular history that was a compilation of two separate traditions.⁷ Walter Bowie argues that the flood story is based on the Babylonian myth called the "Epic of Gilgamesh."⁸ To answer the critics' doubt of the flood one must examine both the internal evidences in the Scriptures and the external evidence of geology. In Genesis 6, the Lord sends a flood to destroy all of mankind in response to sin. In 7:19, the text indicates that all the high mountains of the earth were covered. In the New Testament, 2 Peter reports that the whole world was destroyed in a flood, so Scripture clearly posits a worldwide flood. The external evidences in support of a global flood are many. For example, researches have found animal remains in unusual locations near the Saar Valley and giant boulders near Malta whose presence can only be explained through the violent actions of water.⁹ Another convincing geological discovery in favor of the flood

⁶ Song of Solomon 6:8 says he had 140 when 1 Kings 11:3 says he had 1,000. For a solution to this discrepancy refer to Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990), 264.

⁷ B. Vawter, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 185.

⁸ Walter R. Bowie, "Genesis and Exodus," *The Interpreters Bible*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Pierce and Smith, 1952), 536.

⁹ Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, revised ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 173.

is found in the United States. Lake Bonneville once occupied a part of Utah, Nevada, & Idaho. But today only, the Salt Lake in Utah is all that is left of this great body of water. The worldwide flood of the Bible is the only explanation for this shift in geology.¹⁰ Plenty of other evidence in support of a flood has been discovered all over the world, and all the scientific evidences point to that of a great flood many years ago. The long day of Joshua is yet another scientific discrepancy heavily attacked by critics.¹¹

Moral Discrepancies

Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter in Judges 11 is among the most controversial of moral discrepancies. Ruth Greene argues that the God of the Bible is cruel because God forced Jephthah to kill his daughter. God refused to release Jephthah of his vow and Jephthah burned his daughter dead right before his eyes!¹² This critic argues elsewhere that the God of the Bible is swift to anger and can only be pleased by burning things to death; Christianity, in fact, was founded on human sacrifice.¹³ Robert Boling argues that this story is nothing more than a tale, because no other evidence of such an event is recorded in the Bible.¹⁴ The critical charges are refuted by arguments in support of the view that

¹⁰ Ibid., 191.

¹¹ The solution to the alleged scientific discrepancy in Joshua 10 can be found in Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Rhodes book, *When Skeptics Ask* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 177.

¹² Ruth H. Greene, *The Born Again Skeptic's Guide to the Bible* (Madison: Freedom from Religion Foundation, 1979), 98.

¹³ Ibid., 34.

¹⁴ Robert G. Boling, *Judges*, vol. 6A of *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1975), 210.

Jephthah did not sacrifice his daughter, and she served the rest of her life in the Tabernacle. Tabernacle service was common (Exodus 38:8, 1 Samuel 2:22), and women that served there did many cooking and cleaning chores.¹⁵ Jephthah likely knew that human sacrifice was forbidden (Leviticus 18:21) and after an examination of history prior to Ahaz and Manasseh (2 Kings 16:3; 21:6) exists no evidence of human sacrifice in Israel. Also both Jephthah and his daughter were emotionally balanced, which would be abnormal for such an occasion. Typically when someone is about to be killed or a parent is about to lose a child, they get very emotional.¹⁶ One final point is that if Jephthah sacrificed his daughter, the priests and the public probably would have opposed the sacrifice and Jephthah would not have been permitted to serve as a judge for six years.¹⁷ All the evidence indicates that Jephthah did not literally burn his daughter. Critics also claim that God condones lying.¹⁸

Conclusion

The Bible is the inspired word of God, and no alleged numerical, scientific, moral or any other discrepancy can be proven to contradict the doctrine of inspiration. Liberals and skeptics cling to anything that cannot be explained to be an error, for they believe the Bible to be a human book and not a

¹⁵ Leon Wood, *Distressing Days of the Judges* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 288.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁸ Critics claim that God condoned lying and deceit in 1 Samuel by David and Samuel. The solution to this discrepancy can be found in Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 175-178.

book God inspired through the pens of men.¹⁹ When examining Bible difficulties, the Bible should not be assumed to be wrong (Proverbs 30:5), as the burden of proof falls on those charging Scripture with contradiction. Often critics fail to give the Bible the benefit of the doubt when analyzing its difficulties. Defending the Bible takes time and one must know what the text says. Sometimes animals' names and numbers differ in different translations, and this is all the more reason to use a good commentary when one analyzes texts with an alleged contradiction.²⁰ There are many texts that may sound strange to the modern reader, but when interpreted through the eyes of the original author, the meaning becomes clear. Alleged Bible difficulties must ultimately be examined through this framework.

¹⁹ Stewart Custer, *Does Inspiration Demand Inerrancy?* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1968), 93.

²⁰ Geisler and Rhodes, *When Skeptics Ask*, 164.

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