

DOES THE BIBLE CONTRADICT ITSELF ?

Int.

1. Aim: To show that the Bible does not really contradict itself
2. Text - 2 Tim. 3:16
3. Contradict = Contra - against Dict - words Deny, oppose
4. Infidels frequently claim: "The Bible is filled with mistakes and contradictions !"
 - a. Yet when they are challenged to cite such contradictions, critics will usually generalize by suggesting, "Oh, there are many of them."
 - b. Or else they will introduce a difference between passages, which will not, in fact, constitute a contradiction at all
5. The principle of "innocent until proven guilty" surely must be applied to the Bible.
6. As we normally assume a person to be truthful until it is demonstrated otherwise, so also, a book-including the Bible should be assumed to be internally consistent until it conclusively shows itself to be self contradictory.

Discussion

I. THE NATURE OF A CONTRADICTION

- A. Many people do not have an accurate view of what constitutes a genuine contradiction.
 1. This truth must be constantly emphasized: a mere difference does not a contradiction make!
 2. Well, exactly what is a contradiction? The law of contradiction is essentially this:

"That the same thing should at the same time both be and not be for the same person and in the same respect is impossible."

3. Careful consideration of this rule will reveal that it is composed of several elements.
 4. When one is confronted with an alleged contradiction, for example, he must be absolutely certain that:
 - a. the same person or thing is under consideration;
 - b. the same time period is in view; and
 - c. the seemingly conflicting language is employed in the same sense.
- B. Let us apply these principles to the two following statements to illustrate our point:
1. John is rich. John is poor.
 2. Do these statements contradict? Not necessarily.
 - a. First, two different people named John may be under consideration.
 - b. Second, two different time frames may be in view; John may have been rich, but became poor.
 - c. Third, the words "rich" and "poor" might have been used in different senses; John could be financially poor, but spiritually rich!
 3. The point is this: it is never legitimate to assume a contradiction until every possible means of harmonization has been fully exhausted.

II. NOW, LET THIS PRINCIPLE BE APPLIED TO THE BIBLE

A. Same Person Or Thing

1. An infidel once gleefully announced that he had discovered a discrepancy in Scripture.
 - a. When challenged to produce it, he suggested that whereas Noah's ark with all of its inmates must have weighed several tons — Gen.6

- b. And the priests were said to have carried the ark across the Jordan River
Josh. 3
 - c. The poor fellow did not even know the difference between Noah's ark and the Ark of the Covenant! Two different arks!
2. Another Example: The Bible asserts that the sinner is saved by works; then again, that the sinner is not saved by works. Is this a contradiction?
- a. No, for the Bible speaks of different kinds of works.
 - (1) Salvation does involve works of obedience of Christ's commands
 - (a) Phil.2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
 - (b) Jas.2:14-20 V. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?
 - (2) But it cannot be obtained by works of the Mosaic law
 - (a) Rom.3:28; 4:2
 - (b) or by human works - Eph.2:8-9
 - b. This is not a contradiction in the Bible.

B. Same Time Reference

1. The Bible records: "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen.1:31), and then: "And it repented Jehovah that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart" (Gen.6:6).
2. The unbeliever cites both verses and suggests that the Lord was simultaneously satisfied and dissatisfied with His creation.

3. But the fall of man, and several hundred years of human history separate the two statements!
4. Man was viewed in two entirely different time frames.
5. Some have charged the Bible with a mistake in connection with the time of Jesus' trial and death.
 - a. Mark writes that Jesus was crucified at the third hour (Mark 15:25), while John's account has the Lord being tried at the sixth hour (John 19:14).
 - b. John's record, however, was based upon Roman civil days, while Mark computed according to Jewish time.
 - c. Thus, different time references were involved. There is no contradiction!

C. **Same Sense**

1. If the Bible is to be understood, it is necessary that recognition be given to the different senses in which words may be employed.
2. Normally terms are used literally, but they can be used figuratively as well.
 - a. For instance, in Matthew 11:14, John the Baptist is identified as "Elijah," yet, the forerunner of Christ plainly denied that he was Elijah (John 1:21).
 - b. These verses are easily harmonized. Though John was not literally Elijah, physically reincarnated, nevertheless he was the spiritual antitype of that great prophet; he prepared the way for Christ "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17).

D. **Contradictory Qualities**

1. Another implication of the law of contradiction is the concept that "nothing can have at the same time and at the same place contradictory and consistent qualities."

2. A door may be open; a door may be shut. But the same door cannot be open and shut at the same time.
3. Here is the principle: opposites are not necessarily contradictory.
4. Let this truth be applied to certain Biblical matters.
5. Does the Bible contradict itself, as is sometimes claimed, when it represents God as both loving and hating?
6. No, for these words are used with reference to different objects.
 - a. God loves the world (John 3:16), but He hates every false way (Psalms 119:104).
 - b. He loves righteousness, but hates iniquity (Psalms 45:7),
 - c. He thus responds toward such with either goodness or severity (Romans 11:22).

But there is no contradiction.

E. **Supplementation Not Contradiction**

1. A proposition cannot be both true and false at the same time.
2. If one declares: "I have a son," and then states, "I do not have a son," he has contradicted himself.
3. If, however, he says: "I have a son," and then he announces, "I have a daughter," he does not contradict himself, for he may have both a son and a daughter.
4. This is an example of supplementation, and this is not a contradiction.
5. Many so-called Bible discrepancies can be explained in this fashion.
6. The case of the healing of the blind men of Jericho, often cited as a Bible contradiction, represents an interesting case in supplementation (Matthew 20:29f; Mark 10:46f; Luke 18:35f).

- a. Two problems have been set forth.
- b. First, while Mark and Luke mention the healing of only one blind man, Matthew records the healing of two.
- c. Secondly, Matthew and Mark indicate that blind men were healed as Christ was leaving Jericho, whereas Luke appears to suggest that a blind man was healed as the Lord drew nigh to the city.
- d. As these points are considered, remember this - if there is any reasonable way of harmonizing these accounts, no legitimate contradiction can be charged!
- e. In the first place, the fact that two of the gospel accounts mention only one blind man, while the other mentions two, need not concern us. Had Mark and Luke stated that Christ healed only one man, with Matthew affirming that more than one were healed, an error would surely be apparent. But such was not the case. Obviously Mark and Luke mentioned only the more prominent of the two blind men.
- f. Secondly, there are several possibilities for harmonizing the accounts
 - (1) A popular view among reputable Bible scholars is the fact that at the time of Christ there were actually two towns called Jericho.
 - (2) First, there was the Jericho of Old Testament fame (Josh.6:1f), which, in the first century, lay largely in ruins. About two miles south of that site was new Jericho, built by Herod the Great.
 - (3) The Lord, therefore, traveling toward Jerusalem, would first pass through O.T. Jericho, and then, some two miles to the south-west, go through Herodian Jericho.

(4) The miracles, therefore, may have been performed between the two towns.

Accordingly, the references of Matthew and Mark to leaving Jericho would allude to old Jericho, whereas Luke's observation to drawing near to Jericho would refer to the newer city.

III. WHAT ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS ?

- A. "The National Geographic Society on Thursday released the first modern translation of the ancient "Gospel of Judas," which depicts the most reviled villain in Christian history as a devoted follower who was simply doing Jesus' bidding when he betrayed him." [The Seattle Times - National Geographic releases "Gospel of Judas" translation By Guy Gugliotta and Alan Cooperman The Washington Post April 7, 06]
- B. "The document reportedly argues that Judas Iscariot, known to Christians as the man who betrayed Jesus Christ, was an essential part of God's design and, as such, almost a hero . Without his betrayal, Jesus would not have been crucified and so, the argument goes, God's plan to save mankind from its sins would not have been fulfilled."
[\[http://ansa.it/main/notizie/awnplus/english/news/2006-04-03\]](http://ansa.it/main/notizie/awnplus/english/news/2006-04-03)
- C. Origin of this Document
1. The discovery in the desert of Egypt in 1970 of the leather-bound papyrus manuscript, its wanderings through Europe and Long Island, and now its translation were announced by scholars assembled by the National Geographic Society.
 - a. The 26-page Judas text is believed to be a copy in the Coptic language, made around A.D. 300, of the original Gospel of Judas, written in Greek the century before.

- b. The more recent history of The Gospel of Judas goes back to the 1970s, when a papyrus book, called a codex, was discovered in — and perhaps looted from — an Egyptian burial cave, he said. By 1983, it was being hawked for \$3 million on the clandestine antiquities market.
- c. For 16 years, the codex was kept "moulding and rotting away" in a safety deposit box in the U.S., until the Swiss Maecenas Foundation got hold of it in 2000.
 - (1) Later, the foundation teamed up with the National Geographic Society to conserve, authenticate and analyze the documents.
 - (2) At a news conference Thursday, officials announced that the documents will be returned to Egypt after conservation is complete. [The ChronicleHerald.ca <http://thechronicleherald.ca/Front/495321.html>]
- 2. When the antiquities dealer, Frieda Nussberger-Tchacos, bought an ancient papyrus book in April 2000 containing the Secret Gospel of Judas, he could not even find a buyer.
- 3. What we do know is that the Gospel of Judas was condemned in 180AD by I renaus the Bishop of Lyons. So it existed by then and had made its way from Egypt to Gaul.
- 4. This puts the Gospel of Judas on what is actually a pretty crowded shelf of "secret gospels" from the 2nd Century.

[<http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc>]

 - a. Alternative histories of Christianity were about as popular 1,800 years ago as they are now.
 - b. A new gospel is exciting for scholars, but it is hardly the first.

- c. There are four gospels in the New Testament. But by the time Irenaeus attacked this writing, there were according to some estimates, more than 20 known Christian gospels doing the rounds.
5. This means there is nothing very revolutionary or scandalous in itself about another new gospel turning up.
- a. We have the Gospel of Peter, for example, in which Jesus is not hurt by his crucifixion, and the Gospel of the Ebionites in which he is a vegetarian.
 - b. There is the Infancy Gospel of Thomas where the child Jesus makes birds out of mud and they come alive, and then a boy bumps into him and he kills him.
 - c. What is clear from Irenaeus, and from as much of Judas as we have seen so far, is that it is a gnostic gospel. Gnosticism was a very broad religious movement - there were Christian and non-Christian gnostics.
- D. What is wrong with this document ?
- 1. It may be old but that does not make it a part of the Bible.
 - a. There were many books written during that time
 - b. But this document contradicts many things that are in the Bible.
 - 2. It is in plain contradiction to many things in the New Testament:
 - a. Bible says: Judas hung himself - Matt. 27:3-5
 - b. This document supposedly declares that Judas is forgiven: "He weeps, Jesus forgives him and in order to purify him he sends Judas into the desert to do spiritual exercises." [<http://ansa.it/main/notizie/awnplus/english/news/2006-04-03>]
 - c. Bible tells about the Creation of man in Gen. 1:26-27

- d. In the Gospel of Judas it declares that an Angel by the name of Saklas with the assistance of other angels created man.
3. What is behind this production?
- a. Greed - Money
 - b. Selling of books, DVD's - TV special
- E. This so called new gospel is nothing but another attempt to discredit the Bible and give attention to something new.
- F. It is not on the par with the Bible and since it contradicts many plain passages of the Bible it is not an inspired work. Not a part of the bible canon.

Conclusion

1. In dealing with so-called contradictions in the Bible, therefore, let these principles be carefully remembered:
 - a. (1) No contradiction exists between verses that refer to different persons or things.
 - b. (2) No contradiction exists between passages that involve different time elements.
 - c. (3) No contradiction exists between verses that employ phraseology in different senses.
 - d. (4) Opposites are not necessarily contradictions.
 - e. (5) Supplementation is not contradiction.
 - f. (6) One need only show the possibility of a harmonization between passages that appear to be in conflict in order to negate the force on an alleged Bible discrepancy.
 - g. (7) Finally, the differences in various scriptural accounts of the same events actually demonstrate the independence of the divine writers. They were not in collusion!
2. God, though using human writers in the composition of the Bible, is nevertheless its ultimate Author.

3. And since the perfect God cannot be the source of confusion
 - a. 1 Corinthians 14:33 "For God is not [the author] of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."
 - b. or contradiction Hebrews 6:18 "That by two immutable things, in which [it was] impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:"
 - c. ... it must be acknowledged that the Bible is perfectly harmonious.
4. If seeming discrepancies are discovered, let us apply ourselves to diligent study to resolve them. But let us never foolishly charge God Almighty with allowing errors to be incorporated into His sacred Book!
5. Some say the Bible is full of lies [contradictions].
 - a. Is this true ? Answer: NO !
 - b. His Word is Truth - John 17:17 and it is impossible for God to lie - Tit. 1:2
 - c. There are no untruths, contradictions, or inconsistencies in the Bible.
 - d. In spite of the fact that about forty different inspired men wrote it over a period of one-thousand six-hundred years; one of the many proofs of its inspiration.
 - e. Men have made such foolish charges from the beginning, but none have been able to provide proof of their false allegations.

Sources:

Does the Bible Contain Contradictions? By Wayne Jackson - Christian Courier Sept. 1, 2003

Sermon by Arthur Pigman -
 Evans Church of Christ
 515 Gibbs Road
 Evans, Ga. 30809
 706-855-1249
 arthurpigman@cybrtyme.com