



BIBLICAL TRAINING CENTER

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Common Bible Difficulties with Resolutions

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Norman Geisler: "Having examined over the last 50 years nearly 1000 of these alleged errors in the Bible (see *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties*, Baker), I can testify that I have not found any real errors, only difficulties with solutions..."ⁱ

Types of Difficulties

We can group most difficulties into the following:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| SCIENCE | Saying Bible does not accurately describe physical reality. |
| COUNTS | Passages that seem to differ in reporting some numerical count. |
| THEOLOGICAL | Passages that seem to conflict with Christian theology. |
| CONFLICTING REPORTS | Passages with seemingly different details. |
| CONTRADICTIONS | Passages with statements which seem to contradict each other. |

For example:

| Difficulty Type | Example(s) |
|--------------------|--|
| SCIENCE | 1. Is the Bible wrong about the shape of the earth? |
| COUNTS | 2. Was there only one angel at the tomb or two? 3. Did Paul make a numerical mistake quoting the Old Testament? |
| THEOLOGICAL | 4. Did God (who is all-knowing) forget Noah? |
| CONFLICTING REPORT | 5. Did Jesus heal the blind man coming into or going out of Jericho? |
| CONTRADICTION | 6. Can people see God or not? 7. Does God dwell in darkness or light? |

Great Resource

All 7 of today's problems and solutions come from Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe, *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties: Clear and Concise Answers from Genesis to Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008).

- \$25 in print at Amazon.

- \$29 in Logos under older title of *When Critics Ask: Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties* (Baker, 1992).
- Book contents FREE on DefendingInerrancy.com ("Solutions to Bible Errors" on menu).
- Searchable on GeekySearch.com

Problems / Solutions

Problem #1. Is the Bible wrong about the shape of the earth? (Revelation 7:1)

John speaks in Rev. 7:1 of the "four corners of the earth," which implies that the earth is square. But modern science teaches that it is round. Isn't this a mistake in the Bible?

Summary of possible solution: _____

Problem #2. Was there only one angel at the tomb or two?

Matthew 28:5 refers to the "angel" at the tomb after Jesus' resurrection, and yet John says there were "two angels" there (John 20:12)?

Summary of possible solution: _____

Problem #3. Did Paul make a mistake quoting the Old Testament?

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:8 that 23,000 people died. In Exodus 32:28, the number of people listed as having died is 3,000. This would seem to be an error.

Summary of possible solution: _____

Problem #4. Did God (who is all-knowing) forget Noah?

The fact that Genesis 8:1 says "God remembered Noah" seems to imply that He temporarily forgot him. Yet the Bible declares that God knows all things (Ps. 139:2-4; Jer. 17:10; Heb. 4:13) and that He never forgets His saints (Isa. 49:15). How then could He temporarily forget Noah?

Summary of possible solution: _____

Problem #5. Did Jesus heal the blind man coming into or going out of Jericho?

According to Luke, a blind man was healed as Jesus entered the city of Jericho (Lk. 18:35), but Matthew and Mark declare that the healing took place as Jesus left the city of Jericho (Mt. 20:29; Mk. 10:46). Again, the accounts do not seem to be harmonious.

Summary of possible solution: _____

Problem #6. Can people see God or not?

Exodus 24:9-11 records that Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel ascended the mountain of God and "saw the God of Israel." However, Exodus 19:12-13 says that the people could not even touch the base of the mountain without being put to death. And in Exodus 33:20 God says that no one can see Him and live. How could these people go up the mountain and see God and yet live? Further, John 1:18 says no one can even see God.

Summary of possible solution: _____

Problem #7. Does God dwell in darkness or light?

According to Paul in 1 Timothy 6:16, God “dwells in unapproachable light.” However, the Bible repeatedly says things like “the Lord said He would dwell in the dark cloud” (1 Kings 8:12) because “He made darkness His secret place (Ps. 18:11; cf. 97:2). Which is it—darkness or light?

Summary of possible solution: _____

Conclusion

There are no real errors, only difficulties with solutions. These solutions range from possible to probable. Therefore, considering Jesus’ view of Scripture and the testimony of the early church, there’s no compelling reason to give up a high view of Scripture.

Class Schedule

Title: Are There Errors in The Bible? How to Answer “Problem Passages”

- DONE** Understanding biblical inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy
- DONE** Why is a high view of Scripture important to Christianity?
- DONE** Common Bible difficulties with resolutions (Part 1)
- Feb. 4: Common Bible Difficulties with resolutions (Part 2)

¹ From Norman Geisler, “Biblical Inerrancy, Inductive Or Deductive Basis: A Response To William Craig,” *Defending Inerrancy*, 2014, <http://defendinginerrancy.com/inductive-deductive-inerrancy/> (accessed January 20, 2018).