

Are There Any Errors in the Bible?

June 2023

One of the *blessings* Christians have is that many people *attempt to prove that the Bible contains errors*. That actually helps us carefully examine the Bible to see whether what it says is true! The Bible withstands every criticism.

In the roughly two-thousand years since the writing of the Scriptures, it has never been demonstrated that the Bible contains errors. In fact, as archaeologists discover more and more artifacts, the Bible is increasingly validated.

There is not enough room here to give examples of all the ways the Bible is questioned and yet found true, but here are a five groupings of apparent contradictions in the Bible, which in the end reveal that the Bible is consistent and accurate.

First, the Bible sometimes calls people and places by different names. Just like you might use more than one name, even a nickname, some people in the Bible have more than one name. The most obvious examples are Jacob, also called Israel, and Simon, also called Peter. The same is true for places. In our own time, the same mountain has been known as both Mount McKinley and Mount Denali. Similarly, the Sea of Galilee was also known as the Sea of Tiberius and the Lake of Gennesaret.

Second, was the robe placed on Jesus *red* (Matthew 27:28) or *purple* (John 19:2)? That question assumes the people of Jesus' day distinguished colors the same way we do. Even if they did, is the color we call "maroon" *red* or is it *purple*?

Third, chronological confusions arise regarding how long Jesus was in the tomb, and whether or not He instituted the Lord's Supper on the evening of the Passover. Ancient peoples counted a bit differently than we do. If someone said they would see you in three days, it meant the day after tomorrow, because they counted today as day one. The Hebrew

way of speaking of a day is to say, "evening and morning." Three days and three nights is a way to emphasize three days; it does not mean three full days and three full nights. We also find that the Gospels don't always tell things in chronological order, because they are connecting thoughts thematically instead. Consider the various accounts of Mary anointing Jesus and when, exactly, that took place.

Fourth, the counting of events or people can appear to be contradictory. How many times did the rooster crow? Did Jesus heal two blind beggars, or one? If one of two people were well known in the early church, it is not surprising that an evangelist would only mention that one. That is not saying there was *only* one. Regarding the rooster, it seems that Matthew, Luke, and John, were concerned with how many times Peter would deny Jesus. Mark tells us Jesus stated how many times the rooster would crow.

When testimony is given to police, or in court, one of the things that suggests various witnesses are telling the truth, is differences in detail in their various accounts. If the accounts are *different* without *contradicting*, this suggests that each person is telling something as actually witnessed from a personal point of view. Incidental differences (which are *not* contradictions) *increase*, rather than detract from, the witnesses' credibility.

Finally, there are some questions that come up regarding the way ancient translations rendered some things, especially certain numbers. Yet even the most challenging questions have reasonable explanations.

Now, does that mean that *every* challenge can be answered on the basis of reason? Otherwise said, are there other things *beyond* reason that we must "take on faith"? Yes. Consider: Will Jesus really return one day? Are your sins forgiven by faith in His sacrifice? Is consecrated bread and wine really the body and blood of Christ?

Because the Scriptures have shown themselves faithful in everything we *can* verify, the answer to the questions that we must take on faith is a confident, "Yes!" Notice, for example, how the prophecies that Christ fulfilled support the conclusion that He is who He—and the Scriptures—promised He is: the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Rev. Steven Brockdorf serves as pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church in Hillsboro, Oregon.

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