

“Does the Bible Contradict Itself?”

The question we wrestle with today is this: “Does the Bible contradict Itself?” This is a very important question, especially since, as a Christian the Bible is the foundation of the believer’s worldview, moral compass, source of divine knowledge, and ultimate source of truth. For the Bible to contradict Itself, would mean a complete fracture at the core of every believer’s being as the special creation of God. So, does the Bible contradict Itself? To answer this question we must first consider the Doctrine of Inerrancy, because the things we believe about the Bible’s claims depend on our understanding of It’s truth. After considering this, we will discuss three actual alleged claims of discrepancies given by critics.

Inerrancy

“The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything which is contrary to fact.”
-Grudem

The liberals’ claim that the Scriptures are accurate concerning areas of “only faith & practice” may sound inviting, but actually is often a front to a denial of It’s accuracy concerning teaching of doctrine, history, science, geography, geology, knowledge, etc....

The Scriptures are true. (Ryrie’s Syllogism)

- **God is true.** (Romans 3:3-4)
- **The Scriptures are from God.** (2 Timothy 3:16)
- **The Scriptures are true.** (Psalm 12:6; Proverbs 30:5)

Denying Inerrancy	Believing Inerrancy
God allowed errors in the Bible...	God’s Word has no mistakes...
His Word is unreliable...	His Word is reliable...
The mind of man is authoritative...	The Scriptures are authoritative...
A license for open-mindedness	An anchor to divine authority

Dealing with alleged contradictions

- Archeology

The Bible doesn’t need archeology to prove It’s true because It’s inspired! Archeology is basically only good for its ability in allowing us insight on cultures of the past. The data that comes from it is by far small and always subject to man’s perspective/worldview/interpretation.

- Allegations

Liberals make claims of contradictions because they deny the supernatural and have a very low view of Scripture. They, on the other hand, hold a high view of man’s knowledge and understanding. Those who believe that the Scriptures were simply written by man see it as a logical and expected thing that errors could be made by the authors.

- Numerical Discrepancies

- The Numbering of Solomon’s Stalls
 - 40,000 stalls (1 Kings 4:26); 4,000 stalls (2 Chronicles 9:25)
- Liberals accuse the writer of Kings of inflating this number to an “impossibly high” amount to make Israel seem more powerful. This is a claim that ascribes the Scriptures to human composition and in this case claims that it is being deceptive.
- However, the most reasonable solution to this “discrepancy” is that this is a scribal error, which resulted in an enormously larger number than the more accurate one reflected in Chronicles. The LXX rendering coincide these with the Chronicles account.
 - A scribal error is any type of error that occurs during the transmission (copying) of any written document.
 - Scribal errors do not contradict the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy because these apply only to the original texts. Our Bibles are inspired and inerrant so much as to the point that they reflect the originals.
- Those who hold to the Kings account argue that each stall could hold up to ten horses. This is a possibility since archeological evidence indicates that stalls of that day did accommodate multiple horses.

- Historical/Scientific Discrepancies

- “Phantom Camels” (Genesis 12:16)
- Recently, the issue of “Phantom Camels” in the OT resurfaced following the claim from archeologists from Tel Aviv University that, “new evidence indicates that the first significant appearance of camels in the Aravah Valley was not earlier than the last third of the 10th century BCE [930-901 BC].”¹ This is a problematic claim because Genesis 12:16 indicates that Abraham came to possess Egyptian camels around 2090 BC.
- It is important to notice that these claims are based on an argument from silence, and that the research at these specific locations stretches the data taken from them because basing research from those sites alone automatically limits the timeframe of possibility to whenever those sites were first in use. It’s obvious that no camels worked at a mine that hadn’t yet been built.
- A likely explanation for the absence of camels in the Egyptian monuments is that the Egyptians, much like the Hebrews, considered the camel an unclean animal; therefore, limited indications of their presence have been preserved during the debated time period.
- Regardless, the critical claims stare right in the face of a multitude of archeological evidence that supports a timeframe for domesticated camels in southern Palestine that fits the Biblical accounts



- Perhaps the areas in Scripture that critics like to debate most are alleged discrepancies of morality that seemingly propagate ethical problems in the Scriptures. One such issue is the presence of polygamy throughout portions of the Old Testament, as seen in 2 Samuel 12:7-8 and 20:3 where David takes possession of Saul’s harem. One critic claims that:

“We can hardly point with certainty to a single text in which polygamy is expressly forbidden and monogamy is universally decreed. If, then, we approach the Bible legalistically, we cannot honestly conclude that in this matter we are dealing with an unconditional law of God.”²

On the contrary, a multitude of passages present a monogamous marriage as God’s intended norm for mankind.³ The instances recorded in Scripture that depict polygamy simply are Scripture’s account of what happened, and the message of 2 Samuel 12:7-8 testifies of God’s deliverance of Saul’s possessions into David’s care, not of God’s institution of polygamy.

So, does the Bible contradict itself? Though countless critical claims have been made and it would take many more classes to touch on them all, we have seen a small glimpse today of how critical claims can be refuted with confidence because God is true, and He has given us His Word. It is true.

- Moral Discrepancies

- David taking possession of Saul’s harem (2 Samuel 12:7-8, 20:3)

¹ Lidar Sapir-Hen and Erez Ben-Yosef, “The Introduction of Domestic Camels to the Southern Levant: Evidence from the Aravah Valley,” *Tel Aviv* 40 (2013): 277.

² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957) 3:4:199.

³ See: Gen. 2:24; Lev. 18:18; Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:1-2; 1 Tim. 3:2, 12. Give notice to the singular aspects of the words in: Deut. 28:54, 56; Psalm 128:3; Prov. 5:15-21.