

Is God's Inspiration Of The Bible Imperfect?

Alleged Bible Discrepancies

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Given 18-Feb-17; Sermon #1364

Today we live in a culture where anybody can attack anyone or anything for any reason. People use any lie to attack any truth. With intense hatred they demonstrate, protest, and riot against any issue, basing their reason on emotional reasons that are not even related to what they are demonstrating against.

Some of these hypocritical critics say that they are protesting the mistreatment of immigrants, but freely murder children through abortion. These “fault finders” say they want freedom of speech, but yet they are intolerant and object to the opinion of others. They seek to silence anyone who disagrees with them.

These criticizers treacherously promote the invasion of Islam and the Sharia law in direct conflict with our “peaceful western culture,” while at the same time preferring the quality of life and freedom the influence of the Judeo/Christian culture has provided.

Today Christians, the most persecuted religious group on earth, face increasing verbal and physical attacks for their association with Jesus Christ in the Bible. Vicious feminists, homosexuals, juvenile delinquents, dishonest politicians, judges, and humanists have free reign to express their hatred toward Christians and the sacred Word of God.

We are living in an evil upside-down world and it is a time when evil is celebrated as good and good is condemned as evil as predicted by the prophet Isaiah. Professors of all levels of education increasingly take cheap shots at the Bible. Critics claim that the Bible is full of discrepancies and contradictions.

An article entitled “Biblical Interpretations Obey Social Prescriptions” by Simone Santini, an open atheist, declares this: “Most religious groups have no trouble admitting that some of the things reported in the Bible are not true. Apart from very curious notions of celestial mechanics, there are logical inconsistencies. Matthew and Luke give two completely different genealogies of Jesus, so one of them has to be wrong.”

Is it true that God’s written Word is imperfect? That some of what is written in the Bible is wrong? Is the Bible riddled with error as the skeptics claim?

Many arrogant scholars think the Bible should be considered myth and only useful for its literary value. As incredible as it may seem, the Bible has been studied at the University of California, on its Berkeley campus. It is one of the most liberal of all educational institutions, but as you would expect, it has not only been studied for its theological value, but for its significance as folklore, as mythology.

Anthropology professor, Alan Dundes, skeptically states in his book *Holy Writ as Oral Lit: The Bible as Folklore*: “Should it be the Ten Commandments? What were the names of the disciples? If these questions are hard to answer it may be because the Bible has many discrepancies.” Or maybe he does not know a thing about the Bible!

Dundes claims, "These are variations within the same books as well as between testaments." "One chapter of Genesis clearly states that God created animals before he created man, but in the very next chapter it is clearly the other way around with God creating man before the animals."

In their pursuit to prove the inaccuracy of the Bible, critics show their own ignorance and superficiality, as we see in Dundes' proclamation. Simply stated the different outlines and the order of events between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 arise simply from the condensation of the account in the first chapter and from the disregard of chronological order in the second chapter.

In the first chapter the author gives a general, yet concise account of the 6 days week. In the second chapter, he rephrases the story, and without following the order of time, gives some additional details. Everything in the additional account in chapter 2 is viewed in its relation to man rather than time sequence. Conflict answered.

The narratives of the Bible do not contradict one another but wonderfully complement each other. Many in the world are willingly fooled by the flagrant lies that critics tell about the Bible's alleged imperfections. It is the attempt of the unbelieving attackers of the Bible to question its accuracy in order to cast doubt upon the sovereignty of God.

The Bible provides irrefutable evidence that God is supreme, and He has purposely, for His pleasure, designed the Bible in a way that seems to the unconverted human mind to be riddled with discrepancies and contradictions.

The apostle Paul wrote emphatically in I Corinthians 14:33 that God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. So why did our perfect and omnipotent God produce His written Word leaving so many unanswered questions and seeming contradictions? Why does He permit the discrepancies to exist? What good can come from them?

Human reasoning wonders, if God is so great why did He not just make everything in the Bible obviously perfect in agreement? God's declaration in Isaiah 55 sheds some light in this.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

If you get nothing else out of this sermon today, just know this: there are no true discrepancies of valid contradictions in the Bible. None whatsoever! God has given us His Word in the form He has designed for us. He knew what He was doing when He inspired it and it is perfect according to His will and His plan for the salvation of mankind.

Now let us look at several reasons why God designed the Bible the way He did. God's design of the difficulties in the Bible are there to stimulate our minds. Alleged discrepancies were designed to coax us think deeply; to contemplate and meditate on the facts. They inspire us to search out the truth and make us curious and inquiring of new knowledge and wisdom.

Here is one last quote from Professor Alan Dundes:

The story of the women who came to the place where Jesus had been entombed has four different versions in the gospels. In John 20:1, Mary Magdalene came alone and there

was no mention of any other women. In Matthew 28:1, Mary Magdalene and a woman, known as the other Mary, came together. But then in Mark 16:1-2, Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary, the mother of James, came. And finally, in Luke 21:9-10, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and a woman known as 'the other woman' came with them.

Discrepancies also exist as to what the women saw, whether they were standing or sitting. If this had been a novel, it never would have been printed this way, because you would have had an editor in their saying, 'What do you mean there are twelve commandments, you already said there were ten.'

So why did God not write the entire Bible like a factual, historical novel? Maybe that would have made it more pleasant, interesting, and more understandable for people.

It is true that when we read a captivating novel, we cannot put it down. However, once we have finished it, we usually do not want to pick it back up and read it again anytime soon, because it has nothing else to offer. We have completed the story and we know the ending.

God designed the Scriptures to have a different impact than a novel. By reading in its entirety, or here a little, there a little, we always find it thought provoking. Every time we pick it up we find something we have not noticed before, some spiritual gem that gives us insight into the mind of God. It is a dynamic book, and it is alive, because the Spirit of the God and Creator has inspired it. Isaiah 28 reveals that God designed the Bible to stimulate our minds in this way.

Isaiah 28:9-15 "Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little." For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, to whom He said, "This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest," and, "This is the refreshing"; yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little," that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught. Therefore hear the word of the Lord, you scornful men, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we are in agreement. When the overflowing scourge passes through, it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hidden ourselves."

The Bible's variation and style intrigues the critics. The world is confused by it. They work extra hard to disprove what they try so hard to deny. In their smugness, in denying the validity and truth of the Bible, they feel safe and smug in their own self-made refuge. They are really going to be surprised when the tribulation and the Day of the Lord comes!

Those who are not called, but favorably read their Bibles find wisdom in the letter of the written words and the newly-called find a wealth of spiritual insight in the milk of the Word, and the long-time members find deeper spiritual meaning in the solid food of the Word.

The author of Hebrews was inspired to explain that without continued study and revelation we can regress to needing the milk of the Word instead of the solid food. Without an understanding of the milk we cannot comprehend the solid food of the Word.

Hebrews 5:12-14 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

So for someone to say that what we speak of here in Church of the Great God is just too much for the children to understand; that it is too deep for them to get and that they need something lighter, is not necessarily true, because God will provide both the milk when it is needed, and the solid food when it is needed. I have always been amazed at how much children understand as such early ages. God begins to work with children that are willing to listen early on, before they are even teenagers at times.

The analogy is very clear here. A babe cannot advance to solid food if its body has not matured enough to handle it. Neither can the mind of a Christian advance to assimilating solid spiritual food if its maturity level is only able to understand milk.

These biblical critics are not even of the spiritual maturity of a baby. They have absolutely no spiritual maturity at all. The so-called discrepancies of the Bible have incited a great deal of mental action by people of all education levels. And though the discrepancies in the Bible are a minor element of the overall theme, they have prompted us to search the Scriptures and to ask, "How are these difficulties resolved?" Quite often these things that are incomplete and hard to understand increase our curiosity.

Modern advertisement uses a similar method. The National Inquire magazine for example used to promote: "for people with inquiring minds." That was their whole manner of approach to news or lack of news, or fake news, as we call it today. They had attention grabbers.

Most people are curious when they do not fully understand what they see or hear. Sometimes it is something that contradicts what we have firmly believed. This same principal is used in newspaper headlines where the writers tell us only the amount of information needed to make us curious enough to read the article.

The Bible also has attention grabbers. I am going to read a few scriptures here and, notice the questions that arise from these here.

Proverbs 30:15 The leech has two daughters—Give and Give! There are three things that are never satisfied, four never say, "Enough!"

Proverbs 30:18 There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yes, four which I do not understand.

Proverbs 30:24 There are four things which are little on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise.

Malachi 3:8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.”

Now just as these literary hooks bait the curiosity of the readers so also is a deeper interest awakened by examining two or more passages which appear to contradict each other. To illustrate this let us compare John 15:15 with John 16:12.

John 15:15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

John 16:12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” [To the critics that is a major discrepancy.]

Why did Jesus Christ say the He “made all things known to them” in John 15:15 and “He still had many things to say to them” all in that same hour? John 15:15 is easy to explain by adding a clarifying phrase which we derive from what we read in the rest of the New Testament. It would read: “All things that I have heard from My Father which were designed for you at present, I have made known to you. The message which I have received for you I have faithfully communicated.”

So initially these two scriptures look like they contradict each other and this arouses our curiosity causing us to take a closer look. In the process, God reveals details we would have overlooked otherwise.

The “many things” mentioned in John 16:12 are what we are taught by Jesus Christ immediately after His resurrection and by Him through the Holy Spirit at subsequent times throughout the apostles’ lives.

Now there is a basic spiritual principle contained within these two scriptures that helps us to understand why, at times, certain doctrines and principles are hard to understand. God does not enlighten us until we are spiritually mature enough to make good use of the knowledge, as He did with the disciples.

They could handle certain things *before* His resurrection but they could handle more *after* His resurrection. It took a process of learning before they were able to understand what He had to teach them in further spiritual depth. We do the same thing with our children. Children ask questions that are deep at times and you have to give them an answer that is suitable for their age and level of understanding.

Other “contradictions” in Scripture are too numerous not to be the result of design. They provide a very effective method of instruction, which when conveyed in this way, is more impressive and more likely to excite attention.

Contrasting biblical statements require careful contemplation which results in a more lasting impression compared to the imprint a “quick reading” gives us. It often happens that two apparently opposite scriptures may, together, enable us to direct our faith and our overcoming in the right direction.

One may be calculated to guard against certain errors on side, and the other calculated to guard against certain errors on the other side. Neither one taken alone would convey the exact and entire truth. They would not give you a balanced explanation or solution if it was one way or the other without having both. Both taken in conjunction enable us to understand the principle more fully.

To illustrate this on a physical level let us observe how our bodies work. There are forces which act on the body that are balanced by opposite actions. When we walk, our stride consists of one arm swinging back while the other swings forward. This combination of opposite actions balance the body and smooth out our stride. One hand or foot acting alone does little to help us to walk smoothly.

Now relate this to blessings of material wealth. On the one hand, God tells us through Mark and James that poverty is a blessing. On the other hand, Job is given wealth after he came to realize the true sovereignty of God.

King Solomon wrote that: “Rich is our strength; poverty is destructive.” The critics find this another one of those contradictions. But later in the book of Proverbs, Solomon wrote that “Neither poverty nor riches are desirable.” Comparing these statements with each other, the skeptic immediately assumes that these are contradictions, but pulled together they teach us that God’s way is a way of balance.

We will read some scriptures here to see what wonderful balance they add to a person’s life. First we are going to look at an example of poverty and riches combined.

Mark 10:24-25 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard is it for those who trust in riches to enter the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

The rich man is described in verse 24 as a man who trusts in riches making them his god. But notice in verse 26, the disciples were astonished beyond measure, they were stumped. We will continue reading in verse 26-27 here.

Mark 10:26-27 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?” But looking at them, Jesus said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

That is why it is possible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, because God can shrink it to any size He wants and put it through, but in dealing with man who has free will, it is not as easy.

Another scripture showing that poverty is a blessing:

James 2:5 Listen my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

So James teaches that in humility there is something very favorable to developing true dedication to God. In the increased cares and temptations and anxiety common to wealth, human desire loses control, whereas the poor have less of that specific distraction and are more apt to call upon God for their basic needs.

If you are wealthy, and a problem arises, you throw money on it and problem solved. You have a lot less hassle in life, so to speak, but the end result is not good.

Now let us look at what the critics call a contradiction. The Bible tells us that riches are a blessing in Job 42.

Job 42:12 Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys.

At that time period, wealth was in the form of animals, possessions, and land. This was a miracle in the sense that God brought him back from nothing to a wealthy state once he recognized God as sovereign and his own true level of existence. Job was then able to handle wealth from a much better perspective.

The book of Proverbs contains a storehouse of qualifying explanations. Chapter 10, verse 15 adds a qualifier here to riches being a blessing.

Proverbs 10:15 The rich man's wealth is his strong city; the destruction of the poor is their poverty.

Now there are times when the wealth of the rich will avert danger and suffering and at such times the poor may perish because of a lack of money.

The first half of this verse refers to wealth that was earned properly through good work ethics. In contrast, the second half of this scripture refers to deserved poverty. This type of poverty came as a result of foolishness and always causes one to sink deeper into bad habits. Riches are like a stronghold in our imagination, but not always in fact.

The Bible also tells us that neither poverty nor riches are desirable. So now the critic is just thoroughly confused at his reading of the Bible.

Proverbs 30:8-9 Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches—feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.

There again we see balance, in scripture; in advice; in principals. The prayer of Agur here shows the principal that moderate competence is better than extreme poverty or enormous wealth. Either way it will distract a person from proper reliance on our sustaining God.

These types of conflicting statements spur us to investigate the written Word of God, and while doing so, we unfold deep and rich meanings which amply reward us for our effort. We can clearly see God's design in the difficulties of His written Word. It is obvious that they are there to stimulate our minds. The Bible is dynamic, it is active, it is alive.

Now let us look at another reason God designed the Bible the way that He did. God's design of the difficulties in the Bible are there to lead us to value the spirit above the letter. Alleged discrepancies lead us to value the essentials of God's way of life rather than its form and occurrences.

Many biblical principals are defined by what seem to be contrary statements and they are paradoxes—statements that seem contradictory, unbelievable, or absurd but are in fact true.

We have no portrait of Jesus, no authentic description of His physical appearance. It is by design that no true relics of Jesus or the apostles remain today.

Suppose the original written text of the inspired scriptures had been miraculously translated in the original handwriting of the inspired authors and perfect in every letter and figure. The world would have gone insane over it, not because of what it said, but because of its value of its originality.

Some of the greatest idolatry imaginable would have accumulated around tangible material. Bloody and devastating crusades would have been conducted for its possession and men would have worshipped the physical writings in flagrant opposition to the Spirit of God's written Word.

The Scriptures are given to us in this present condition to counteract this tendency to idolatry. Over the years I have occasionally run into people attending the church of God who have said they would never write notes in their Bibles because they do not want to defile it. The Bible is a workbook for life, it is the instruction manual for how to live and God wants us to use it in that way.

Although we should respect and care for the effort, the blood, sweat, and tears that went into producing such a blessing in the form of a useful material book, the true value is not in the material in which God's Word is contained but rather in the spiritual understanding of the words imparted to us through the Holy Spirit.

The alleged discrepancies in Scripture force us to look at the spirit above the physical.

II Corinthians 3:2-6 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men [meaning that we, members of God's church, are a living, walking witness of God's way of life; an epistle in and of itself.]; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh [that is of the heart], that is, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Now the Jews of Paul's day insisted on emphasizing the letter of the law, but never broke through to its real spiritual meaning. They did not seek out the true spiritual sense of the Old Testament and therefore they rested on the literal observance, rites, and ceremonies of religion without understanding their true nature and design purpose.

The Jews service, though in many respects conformed to the letter of the law, became cold, formal, and hypocritical, and they excelled in mere ceremonies where little or no spiritual understanding was needed. As a result there was little pure spiritual worship offered to God. They also rejected the Messiah for whom the Old Covenant was designed to prepare the way.

The first covenant allowed people to live by sight, but the second covenant requires people to live by faith.

Hebrews 9:11-15 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

The blood of animals symbolically purifies the physical flesh, but Christ's unblemished sacrifice actually cleanses our mind on a spiritual level. God does not usually reveal the truth concerning a specific subject in any one passage alone. Remember Isaiah 28, God teaches "here a little, there a little."

To understand any subject in the Bible we must view all the scriptural evidence regarding that particular subject. We cannot read our traditionally inherited or desired meaning into any individual verse. We are even warned by Paul against "the traditions of men" that people continue to follow.

II Peter 1:20-21 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Each scripture is interpreted by and in light of the other scriptures. It is very common for mainstream Christians to quote only part of Romans 3:20, which says:

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight.

And from this passage alone they assume that salvation comes by faith in *disobedience* of God's law. Those who interpret that passage in this way neglect to tell us that in Romans 2:13, the same apostle Paul was inspired to write:

Romans 2:13 (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.

The skeptics love this false interpretation of Romans 3:20 because it hands them the appearance of contradiction on silver platter delivered by mainstream Christians themselves. So mainstream Christianity is fake Christianity.

If the one scripture is intended to reveal that we do not have to make an effort to obey God's law to be justified, and then be given the gift of salvation but that we are saved by faith without obedience to God's law, then indeed in mainstream Christianity's mind God contradicts Himself in His Word.

Mainstream Christianity has strayed so far from God that most believe that the Bible is nothing more than a book of stories or allegories, symbolism but not meant to be taken realistically.

They readily accept this contradiction because it fits their lifestyle and not really wanting to obey God's written Word. Mainstream Christians quote Romans 3:20 with Ephesians 2:8-9 alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

But those who quote this text so freely to teach the doctrine of no works deceitfully never tell you what the inspired words also tell you in James 2.

James 2:14-20 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

There is no contradiction here. By putting all the scriptures on saving faith together we learn that there are two kinds of faith. The kind so blindly trusted in by the majority today is nothing but a dead faith and a dead faith will never save anyone.

By valuing the Spirit above the letter we understand the uselessness of faith without works. Continuing on in verse 21.

James 2:21-22 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

James 2:24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

So obviously we are not saved by works instead of faith. We are saved by faith but faith functions along with our works, and by works faith is made perfect. This is living, active faith and it is the only kind of faith that will save you. It is a faith that trusts God to make it possible to obey Him and to truly live God's way of life by keeping His commandments, statutes, and precepts.

Biblical difficulties lead us to value the Spirit beyond the letter of scriptures. It makes us value the essentials of God's way of life rather than its form and occurrences.

When a person emphasizes the letter only and never breaks through to its real spiritual meaning, the real essence of why Christ died for us is misunderstood on an emotional level rather than being understood at a spiritually active level. We must have a faith-with-works level of spiritual understanding, meaning that we must have belief and works together.

In this we see God's design in the difficulties of God's written Word. It is obvious that they are also there to lead us to value the Spirit above the letter.

God's design of the difficulties in the Bible is there to serve as a test of our moral character and faithfulness. Sometimes the scriptures present difficulties which may sometimes seem unsolvable. They test our sincerity and faithfulness and our gauge to evaluate the honesty of our character.

To the world, Christ's teachings often have the appearance that they are obscure, if not offensive. To the critical and skeptical Jews, Jesus spoke many things in parables to which they did not understand.

Mark 4 contains quotes Christ's reasons for parables and difficult scriptures.

Mark 4:11-12 And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them.'"

Jesus spoke this way so they would not understand what He was talking about. Understanding spiritual principles only comes by revelation from God through His Spirit. Jesus said in John 6:

John 6:53 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you."

This statement effectively filtered out those hypocritical followers who found Christ's phraseology repulsive. Their lack of understanding and sincerity exposed them and in this way He tested and exposed people's character and motives, and He sifted out the chaff from among those who heard Him.

John 6:60-66 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

Now external harshness and obscurity of His sayings serves to weed out those followers who were not teachable and submissive. Those disciples who were teachable He helped to understand the true depth of His teachings.

The alleged discrepancies of the Bible provide an opportunity for a biased person to explain away and deceitfully hide truth from himself. Our genuine handling of the spiritual difficulties in the Bible indicates the condition of our moral character and spiritual understanding. And those who are inclined to find fault always find it no matter what or whom the criticism is toward. Human nature does not miss the opportunity to criticize or listen to the criticism of others.

Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.

We have a mainstream media loaded with fools.

Proverbs 17:4 An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue.

God wants to be revealed to those who seek Him with their whole heart, and He wants to be hidden from those who disobey Him. People who revel in a fault-finding attitude, who are intent on twisting the truth and urging sarcastic and silly objections, find in the inspired written Word of God difficulties and disagreements which are designed as stumbling stones for those who criticize the Word. They are disobedient to God's truth because of their hardened and rebellious attitudes.

I Peter 2:8 "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

Now upon those who are willfully dedicated to error, God sends confusion so they willingly believe the lie.

II Thessalonians 2:11-12 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. [or pleasure in worldliness]

God causes presumptuous critics to work out their own condemnation and ruin.

Those who try to discredit God's written Word and treat it as any other book will find themselves punished by their own methods by the designer of the Bible. God rebukes them by their own error and disciplines them by their own failures and gives them the reward of their own hands.

Job 34:11 For He [God] repays man according to his work, and makes man to find a reward according to his way.

By their own arrogance in trying to solve their own problems their own way, they will eventually witness their own downfall, by the same system they created to solve their own problems.

Isaiah 3:10-11 "Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

Sin always carries its reward within itself. Its punishment is frequently quick and decisive, but other times punishment comes in time, but it always comes. Every difficulty and discrepancy in the Bible is capable of a fair and reasonable solution.

When the difficulties of Scripture are approached with a humble and reverent heart and mind, they enhance our perception of God's truth and improve our faith. But when they are dealt with in a fault-finding and dishonest manner they become judicial instruments in linking critical skepticism to its appropriate penalty, which is death.

It is easy to see God's design in the difficulties of His written Word. They are there to serve as a test of moral character.

Another reason why God designed the Bible the way He did was to illustrate analogies between the Bible and nature making their common origin clear—that God is the Designer, the Creator, and the Sustainer of all life.

The self contradictions of the Bible are produced on a magnitude scale in nature. Wherever we look the material universe provides unmistakable traces of God's infinite wisdom, power, and His love. The omnipotence of God is seen in the immensity and magnificence of the universe.

Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.

The excellence of God's design is also seen in the earth's ecosystem. From the balmy breezes to the refreshing dews and showers; from the song birds and insects, to the flowers of brilliant hues and pleasant odors, all of these proclaim the excellence of the Designer, and proclaim the sovereignty of the Creator and the attributes of the Sustainer, as does God's written Word. Biblical descriptions of God are beyond human comprehension.

Job 26:7-14 "He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing. [That right there blows the mind, it is beyond human comprehension!] He binds up the water in His thick clouds, yet the clouds are not broken under it. He covers the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud over it. He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at His rebuke. He stirs up the sea with His power, and by His understanding He breaks up the storm. By His Spirit He adorned the heavens; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent. Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways, and how small a whisper we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?"

We only get a glimpse of God's omnipotent glory in looking at His creation and the universe. God's ways can be compared to a physical page of the Bible. When we look at the flat side we see a lot of wisdom in the form of words, but what we actually see of God's wisdom is like looking at just the sharp edge of the page of the Bible. God's wisdom is so much greater than that, we only have the slightest inkling of how great His wisdom truly is.

How could anyone ever think, even for a moment, that the Bible, with a designer unlimited in His attributes, would not have written His words just as He designed it, perfectly for His purpose. In Psalm 103 God gives us a comparison between His physical creation and His spiritual intervention.

Psalm 103:11-12 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him [that is a lot of mercy He gives toward us]; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

So if we have repented of our sins and accepted Christ as our personal Savior and we are working to overcome our faults, then look how far away He removes our transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:13-18 As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is

gone, and its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.

The criticisms by the disobedient are so insignificant as a dead flower that the wind blows away, they are nothing but dust.

Looking into the same arena from a different viewpoint, we see a very different picture. We see anguish, agony, sorrow, and suffering dominating this sinful world, but God chooses not to intervene on behalf of those who hate His truth.

Proverbs 1:27-31 When your terror comes like a storm, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies.

Those who seek to discredit the Bible will have to eat their own words and those words will choke them to death, if they do not repent.

Critics of the Bible claim that there is a contradiction between Proverbs 1:28 and Proverbs 8:17.

Proverbs 1:28 [speaking of those that hate knowledge] "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me."

Proverbs 8:17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me.

These scriptures may be clear to us, but critics have a real problem with them. These two texts, as the connection makes clear, point to entirely different classifications of people. Many commentators take Proverbs 8:17 to apply to the young who seek God.

The term rendered "diligently" or "early" in the KJV comes from a noun indicating the morning dawn. The indication is to seek something while it is yet early, do not wait until it is too late.

In the obscurity of the "morning light," the indication here is to seek something while it is yet early in the obscurity of the morning twilight. This illustrates eager and diligent seeking. The sense is that those who seek Me in youth will find Me as will those who are diligent to seek Me.

In Proverbs 1:28, "They will seek me diligently but will not find me" refers to those who sin as a way of life. They have hated knowledge, have not chosen the fear of the Lord, and have despised all of His reproof.

So the two texts can be accurately paraphrased in this way: "Those who early and earnestly seek will find Me, but unrepentant rebels who earnestly seek Me at a time of their own punishment will not find Me." Properly explained, there is not the slightest conflict between the two verses.

Now in nature we see great conflicts and tremendous strife which in appearance seem to seriously conflict with the character and attributes of God, nevertheless nature is God's handiwork. Did God creation a creation with such chaos in it?

Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.

Psalm 89:11-13 The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all its fullness, You have founded them. The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Your name. You have a mighty arm; strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand.

So we clearly see God's design in the difficulties of His written Word. It is obvious that many are there to illustrate the connection between the Bible and nature.

Consider the long interval of time the Bible covers, almost six thousand years of man's history. Now think about the facet that about 19 centuries have passed since the last book was written and that during all but the last four centuries of this time, the Bible has been circulated and translated in manuscript form, that is handwritten and copied.

Consider also that our knowledge of ancient times is extremely limited and inconsistent and that many minuscule and sometimes important circumstances regarding every event have passed irretrievably from mankind's memory, or from the writings from human history.

When these obstacles are taken into account it is easy to understand why at times an explanation of a scriptural difficulty may seem inadequate. Although there may be some things about the Bible in its present state for which we cannot account, it is in our best interest to wait for more information from God either by inspiration or by revelation of facts. Nevertheless what God has given in His written Word is sufficient for teaching a person with God's Holy Spirit how to live His way of life.

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, . . .

He reveals His way of life and our responsibility in a planned and calculated way. Not the way lightning strikes, but the way the sun gradually rises illuminating the morning. That is the way we learn, it is not just a bang flash. When we come up out of the water after baptism we think, "Ok, now everything is going to be clear," but we will have to work hard to continue our learning process through our whole lives.

He who denies that the Scriptures were designed by God on account of its difficulties, must, for the same reason, deny that the world was designed by Him. So we see how it begins: deny the Bible, deny that it has any inspiration, and it is easier to deny that God even exists.

Why do these critics insist on believing that God contradicts Himself? The answer is found in Job 21.

Job 21:14 Yet they say to God, 'Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?' [I am sure that was said in a snide, arrogant way.]

The contradictions were designed to illustrate analogies between the Bible and nature, clearly showing that the common origin is God the Designer, Creator, and Sustainer.

Let me use the “forest for the trees” to illustrate this fact here. This was written by the ‘famous’ Anonymous.

The setting is a beautiful lush forest, the wind it rustling the leaves and the birds are singing. The critic says, ‘It could not have been designed by an omnipotent God because it is imperfect. There are plants and trees that have fallen over and are rotting.’ God hears him and thinks, ‘That is the way I designed it, so that there would be a constant fertilizing of the other plants and trees.’

The critic says ‘There are termites in the trees which cause the trees to die.’ God hears him and thinks, ‘That is the way I designed it so that the strong and new vegetation could flourish as I prune the unfruitful vegetation. The critic says, ‘What a poor ecosystem. The leaves fall off in the autumn and do not come back until spring.’ Loudly God proclaims through His creation, ‘This is all part of My plan. The simplicity in it is for your peace, enjoyment and education. But for you to enjoy the simplicity, you have to have faith that I, the Sovereign God, have designed it this way. It is perfect according to My design and purpose, it is My pleasure to have it this way. Who are you to question Me, you who cannot see the forest for the trees!’

The Bible has the same Designer as nature and displaying similar though far less important contradictions. God designed His written Word just as He intended it. It is perfectly suitable for teaching the essence of the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God.

No notice the incident where Jesus withered the fig tree here in Matthew 21.

Matthew 21:18-22 Now in the morning, as He [Christ] returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither away so soon?” So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” [The qualifier being anything we ask in faith, that is according to God’s will.]

Now when Jesus preformed this miracle, it was not the season for figs, which explains why Jesus went to this particular tree which stood out because it was in leaf. Its leaves advertised that it was bearing fruit, but the advertisement was false.

Jesus saw the opportunity of teaching a memorable object lesson. So He cursed the tree, not because it was not bearing fruit, whether in season or out, but because it made a show of life that promised fruit but was not bearing any.

Some critics claim that Matthew contradicts Mark 11:12, but this is not the same incident. The cursing of the fig tree in Matthew is a symbolic cursing of anyone who hypocritically puts on the face of a true Christian but fails to produce faith and righteousness or spiritual fruit. Jesus taught that whatever we ask in faith according to His will, He will give us.

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Bible difficulties are part of a carefully designed manual for salvation. These biblical difficulties are intended to stimulate our minds and coax us to think deeply, contemplate and meditate on the wisdom from above. They inspire us to seek out the truth and make us curious and inquiring of new knowledge and wisdom.

The difficulties lead us to value the Spirit above the letter of the Scriptures; to value the essentials of God's way of life rather than its appearance. Many biblical principles are defined by difficult statements and these paradoxes serve to illustrate to those God has called.

The so-called discrepancies were designed to test our moral character and faithfulness. There is significant aspect of man's education and testing with regard to God's way of life and through this teaching and testing God completes His special people as firstfruits in His Kingdom. For a final scripture we will read I Peter 2.

I Peter 2:7-9 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Right there is a description of the world and God's Family. "Out of darkness" is the world and "His marvelous light" is God's Kingdom. God has appointed the disobedient to stumble over the Bible. To them it is confusing, but from God's omniscient perspective there are no true discrepancies nor valid contradictions in the Bible.

God has given us His Word in the form He designed and He knew what He was doing when He inspired it and it is perfect according to His will and plan of salvation for mankind.

The true significance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is a confusing paradox which has been revealed to us through the wisdom, inspiration, and careful design with which God produced His written Word.

And there are so many more spiritual gems that affect change in our lives. What a wonderful blessing it is to have ready access to the inspired written Word of God in its present form. God's inspiration of the Bible is absolutely perfect and we have the wonderful blessing of having full access to it, and not only that, we have God's Spirit which enables us to understand it and the direction of Jesus Christ to help us and guide our lives in the right direction.