

IT'S FULL OF ERRORS AND CONTRADICTIONS

- ✓ DISCLAIMER: I don't pretend to have the answer to every difficulty and apparent contradiction. But, through 45 years of study, I've found answers to enough of these issues, that I'm confident that even when I can't see an answer yet ... I know there is one!

I. Factual Errors in the Bible

- ✓ In a parable about the kingdom of heaven, Jesus called the mustard seed the "smallest of all seeds" upon the earth" (Mk. 4:31 Amp.). Atheists point out that an orchid seed, for example, is more than twenty times smaller than a mustard seed. "If Jesus were really God", they say, "He'd have known that!"
- ✓ J. Dwight Pentecost: "The guide took us to what appeared to be a tree some ten to twelve feet high and removed a seed pod. When he opened it, we saw the familiar mustard seed. Then the guide put that seed in the palm of his hand and crushed it with his thumb. What appeared to be a smudge of black dust spread out of the crushed seed. This dust was identified by the guide as the seed of the mustard. What we commonly refer to as a 'mustard seed' is really a container for a multitude of seed."

II. What Constitutes a Contradiction?

- ✓ Adding Additional Information is Not a Contradiction.
- ✓ Suppose I met both the Police Chief and the Fire Chief at the mall. Later, I run into P. Terry, and I tell him the part of the story I know he'll be interested in – (that I had seen the Fire Chief.) Then, later, I see you and tell you I had seen the Fire Chief AND the Police Chief. ("Wow! Look at the pastor contradict himself!")
- ✓ There was no contradiction there – (unless I told P. Terry that I had ONLY seen the Fire Chief). But if I share a detail with you that I didn't mention to P. Terry, that's not a contradiction. Both stories are true.

- ✓ Mark records the story of the Madman of Gadara. But, in Matthew's account it says, "... there met him TWO possessed with devils ..." (Mt. 8:28). In his account, Mark didn't say there *weren't* two. He just ignored the quiet one and focused on the more vocal of the two.
- ✓ That illustrates what a contradiction actually *is*: Two statements are said to be contradictory when one asserts what the other denies. (If Mark said there was ONLY one man, while Matthew said there were two, then that would be a contradiction. But, if Mark just *doesn't mention* the second man, there's no contradiction at all.)

III. Solving Apparent Contradictions

- (i) Keep In Mind That the Bible Talks About Different Kinds of the Same Thing
 - ✓ There are 2 Kinds of knowledge, righteousness, goodness, suffering, testing, tongues ... there's 3 kinds of life, death, faith, baptism ... there's 4 kinds of love and confession ... there's 6 kinds of sin ... and 9 kinds of prayer.)
 - ✓ So, they'll see Paul say in one place that "tongues are for everyone", and in another place he says, "tongues aren't for everyone". And they'll say, "I've found a contradiction!" (And I think, "No. you haven't! There are two kinds of tongues. One is for everyone, and the other isn't for everyone. It only looked like a contradiction to you, because you didn't know the Scriptures.)
 - ✓ Gen. 2:17 – "In the day you eat thereof (Adam), you shalt surely die." They'll say, "See? God was wrong! Adam *didn't* die that day! He lived to be over 900 years old!" (Adam didn't die physically that day, but he DID die spiritually! So, the Bible is right again!)

- (ii) It Helps to Dig Into the Original Languages

Acts 9:7 – "And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man."

Acts 22:9 – “And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they **heard not the voice** of him that spake to me.”

✓ How is that not a contradiction?

English has “tenses”. Greek has “voice, tense, mood, and case” to take into consideration. There are two cases in play here – genitive and accusative. Simply put, there are two ways the word “hear” is used: [a] To **hear and understand** the message, [b] To **hear and not understand** the message. There’s a good illustration of this in John 12.

John 12:29 – “The people therefore, that stood by, and **heard it**, said that **it thundered**.” (They heard it. But they didn’t hear it as “words”. They heard a sound and said, ‘Hey, it thundered!’.) Jesus, on the other hand, heard and understood exactly what the Father had said.) That’s what happened on the road to Damascus:

Acts 9:7 (Wuest) – “And the men who were journeying with him stood speechless, **HEARING** indeed the voice **as a sound only** and not understanding the words, moreover not seeing anyone.”

Acts 22:9 (Wuest) – “And those with me saw indeed the light but **DID NOT HEAR** the voice so as to understand the words, but **heard it merely as a sound**.”

(iii) Sometimes Knowing the Physical / Cultural Context Helps

Luke 18:35 – “... as He was **approaching Jericho**, it happened that a certain blind man was sitting by the road begging.”

Mark 10:46 – “As He **went out of Jericho** with his disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timeaus, sat by the road begging.”

✓ In Jesus’ day there was what was called “The Twin Cities of Jericho”.

✓ The old city of Jericho had largely been destroyed, (but it was still there, and still inhabited by some). The newer city had been built by the Romans. (So, there were two Jerichos, “a stone’s throw” apart.) Evidently, Jesus was on His way out of one and into the other. Somewhere between the two, sat Blind Bartimaeus.

(iv) Sometimes You Just Have to Think it Out in Its Context

Prov. 26:4-5 – “**Answer not** a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. **Answer** a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

✓ Obviously, the difference is in what you mean by “according to”. You can easily determine the writer’s meaning by the context.

✓ “Answer **not** a fool according to his folly, **lest you be like unto him**.” (Don’t respond in kind. Don’t answer HIS folly with MORE folly. Or you’ll be just like him.”.)

✓ “**Answer a fool according to his folly** ... (Answer a fool with the rebuke that his folly deserves. If you don’t rebuke him, he’ll continue to be wise in his own eyes.) Just a bit of thinking cleared it up.

Malachi 3:6 – “For I, the Lord, **do not change** ...”

Exodus 32:14 – “So the Lord **changed his mind** about the harm He said He would do to His people ...”

✓ What does Malachi mean by “change”? God doesn’t change in His character (His essence, Who He is). But God *does* respond to our repentance. In this second verse, the people repented. And there was no more need for judgment. (God didn’t change, *they* did.)

✓ My Rule of Thumb: If I find what looks like is a contradiction, I just know, **there’s a revelation in there somewhere**. If I don’t find the answer immediately, I don’t question my faith. I just set it on the shelf, knowing that eventually, the Word will be proven right.