

01 – WHY SO MANY “CONTRADICTIONS”?

- ✓ About a year ago, I did a series I called “Answering Atheists”. In that series, I tried to provide well-researched answers to the stumbling-blocks people encounter when they first consider Christianity. (Of the ones we looked at, probably the *biggest* stumbling-block is the Bible’s perceived “contradictions”.)

- ✓ In that series, we looked at the hardest “contradictions” I could find – ones where there seemed to be no answer. (But, with just a bit of “digging” we figured it out.)

A.) Blind Bartimaeus

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 Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging.”

- ✓ That looks like a hopeless contradiction! One gospel said they were approaching Jericho when they saw Bartimaeus. The other said they were leaving the city when they saw him. They can’t both be right. (Or can they?)
- ✓ In Jesus’ day there existed what was called “The Twin Cities of Jericho”. The *old* city of Jericho had largely been destroyed. (But it was still there, and it was still inhabited by some). A *new* Jericho had been built by the Romans. So, there were two Jericho’s, a “stone’s throw” apart.
- ✓ Evidently, Jesus was on His way out of one Jericho and headed toward the other. On the road between the two, sat Blind Bartimaeus. As they approached him, one writer looked back and said, “We just *left* Jericho”. The other writer looked ahead and said, “We’re *almost at* Jericho”. Who was right? They both were! There’s no contradiction there whatsoever. Problem solved.

B.) Did the Men Travelling with Saul of Tarsus *Hear* or *Not Hear* the Voice?

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 spoke to me.”

- ✓ How can this one be explained? There are two ways the word “hear” is used in the original language: [i] To hear and understand what was said, and [b] To hear and not understand. There’s a great illustration of this in John 12, where the Father spoke from Heaven.

John 12:29 – “The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered.” (They did hear it. But they didn’t hear intelligible 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. Wuest’s translation brings this out.

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.”

- ✓ In this series, we’re going to look at another reason why people see contradictions in the Bible. (This is, by far, the biggest reason for these apparent contradictions.) But before I tell you what it is, let me say this.
- ✓ One thing I’ve noticed through 37 years of ministry, is this: If you talk to *Christians* about the “contradictions” in the Bible, usually they’ll say, “What contradictions?”. But, if you go to an atheist website, (like I did, in researching for our Atheist series), you’ll find

lists of hundreds, if not thousands, of contradictions. Now, why is that? Why can atheists find *thousands* of contradictions, while Christians struggle to find *any*? (Are Christians gullible & stupid, as some atheists suggest? Of course not.)

- ✓ The *biggest* reason atheists can pile up so many “contradictions” is **they don’t realize** that Scripture talks about **several kinds** of the same thing. (For instance ...)
- ✓ The Bible talks about **2 Kinds** of knowledge, righteousness, goodness, suffering, testing, and tongues. There’s ...
 - ❖ **3 kinds** of life, death, faith, and baptism
 - ❖ **4 kinds** of love and confession
 - ❖ **6 kinds** of sin
 - ❖ **9 kinds** of prayer – (that’s just a *partial* list of “kinds” in the Bible)
- ✓ Now before you wonder why that is, let me remind you ... nearly *everything* in life is like that!
- ✓ Take coffee: There’s *strong* coffee, *weak* coffee, *iced* coffee, *flavored* coffee, *decaf* coffee, *latte*, *mocha*, *espresso*, *cappuccino* ... There are *all kinds* of coffee, and you could potentially say something about *one* kind that might not be true of the others. (“It keeps me up at night.” That might be true of most coffees, but not decaf.)
- ✓ That’s What Happens, So Often, with the Bible: People fail to distinguish between “kinds”. In one place, Paul says tongues *are* for everyone. In another place, he says tongues *aren’t* for everyone. How is *that* not a contradiction?
- ✓ Simple ... there are **two kinds of tongues**. One is for everybody; the other is not. (The Christian *knows* that, so he’s not fazed. But the atheist walks away disgusted at yet *another* contradiction in the Bible.) In this series, we’re going to look at “kinds”.
- ✓ When you understand that there are different “kinds” of the same thing, it will solve a lot of apparent “contradictions”.

1.) Three Kinds of Life and Death

- ✓ Let’s look at the “life” side first. (You’ll already be familiar with at least two of them.)
 - a.) **Physical Life** – We all understand this one. (We learned this in science class. You breathe, you eat, you grow, you reproduce, you move ... you must be alive.)
 - b.) **Eternal Life** – Eternal life means more than just “existing forever”. (Sometimes we say, “Come to Jesus, and you’ll exist forever. But that’s not the best way to put it. Think about it. Even people in the lake of fire will exist forever. Right? But you couldn’t say *they* have eternal life.)
- ✓ The Greek word for “eternal life” is “Zoe” and it means, “**life as God has it**”.

John 5:26, 10:10 – “As the Father has life (**zoe**) in Himself, so has He granted the Son to have life (**zoe**) in Himself ... I am come that you might have life (**zoe**).”

- ✓ When you receive Christ, your sins are washed away, and God puts His (zoe) life in you. You’re connected to God, and you’ll live with Him forever. You’re not waiting to get eternal life someday. It’s in you right now!
- c.) **Spiritual Life** – This is the one you may not be familiar with. Spiritual life is a state of innocence before God. (You haven’t received eternal life yet, but you’re innocent and aware of God. Adam had this kind of life in the Garden. In this state of innocence, he was allowed to make a choice. He could eat of one tree or the other.)

Three Kinds of Death

- ✓ “**Death**”, in the Bible, never means “to go out of existence”. Death, in the Bible, refers to “separation”. There are 3 kinds of separation (that we call “death”) that we should be familiar with.

a.) **Spiritual Death** – “Spiritual death” is separation from God.

Isa. 59:2 – “Your sins have separated you from God.”



✓ This was our condition before we came to Christ. We *had* a spirit, but it was separated from God. (We didn't have His life. We didn't have His nature. Our sins weren't forgiven, and we weren't on the way to Heaven. We were headed someplace else.) Most of the world is in this condition. We call it being “lost” or “spiritually dead”.

b.) **Physical Death** – We all understand this one. We learned about it as children, when our “doggie” or our grandparents died.

Physical death is the separation of a person's spirit and soul from his body. At death, the spirit and soul leave. They step out of the body, and the body falls over. We call that physical death – (James 4:17).

c.) **Eternal Death** – is eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire.

If you never come to Jesus, and you *die* in your state of spiritual death, then you're locked into that state of death. (You'll STAY separated from God eternally.)

Where Do the Atheists Get Confused Over Death?

Genesis 2:17 – “On the day you eat from it, you will surely die.” (CEV – “You will die before the day is over.”)

✓ The atheist website (that I did my research on) accused God of being wrong. They'll say, “God said Adam would die on the day he ate the fruit. But he *didn't* die that day. He lived for another 900+ years!”

✓ But the truth is, Adam did die that day. (As soon as he ate, he died spiritually – he was separated from God. Then, his body died physically, hundreds of years later.) So, the Bible was right after all.