

Session III

# MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS



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## CHAPTER XVI

## ALLEGED BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS

In spite of all the Bible's claims and the innumerable evidences of its inspiration, skeptics continue to reject it as the authoritative Word of God. Whatever may be the real underlying reasons for this attitude, the expressed excuses often center on the so-called contradictions in the Bible.

Indeed, if there really are contradictions in the Bible, our belief in plenary verbal inspiration would be difficult to maintain. God the Holy Spirit would not contradict Himself.

There is no doubt, however, that it is easily possible to find a great number of *apparent* discrepancies in the Bible. Critics have been discovering and exploiting these for many generations. Most of these problems have been explained and reconciled long ago by conservative scholars, but the answers are commonly ignored and the same old supposed contradictions continue to be paraded by such critics.

## Reasons for the Discrepancies

Since the Bible is indeed the inspired Word of God, and since there really are many of these superficial contradictions, it seems evident that God must actually have had reasons for allowing them in the Scriptures. We have already looked at much evidence that the very words of the Bible are divinely inspired and, if so, this can only mean that even those words which seem to create problems of this kind must be there for some good reason.

△ Certain possible reasons can be suggested. In the first place, the existence of so many apparent discrepancies certainly disproves the notion of collusion or intentional deception on the part of the writers. If it so happened that everything was in perfect agreement and this agreement between Moses and Isaiah, between Paul and Peter, between Matthew and John,

was all very obvious, right on the surface as it were, then skeptics would immediately seize on this as evidence of collaboration or forgery. Real people, separated by great spans of time or distance, simply don't write of their own volition in concert such as this, and perfect agreement would naturally generate suspicion. The apparent contradictions of the Bible, therefore, first of all serve the purpose of refuting this kind of objection.

But, furthermore, they also stimulate Bible study! God desires and commands us to study the Scriptures (II Timothy 2:15), and there are few motives which can so stimulate us to diligently search the Scriptures as that of trying to find the answer to a problem or the solution to a difficulty. The Bible-believing Christian cannot be satisfied with the easy answer that the discrepancies are merely reflections of the fallibility of the human writers of the various books. He knows that these writers, being men, were fallible, and that their writings do manifest their respective backgrounds and viewpoints, but he also knows their writings were simultaneously guided by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he is confident that, since the Holy Spirit is God and God does not contradict Himself, the superficial disagreements of the Bible must invariably exhibit a deeper agreement which reveals in greater measure the full counsel of God. Consequently, the desire to find these broader and deeper truths in the Bible, manifesting in greater majesty the full purposes of God, is a strong incentive to systematic, in-depth, study of the Word. And this is good!

When, in such a case, the solution finally is actually found, the Christian experiences a strengthening of his own faith in God's Word and of his love for the Lord, such as few other experiences can give. This must therefore constitute yet another reason why God has allowed these superficial problems and contradictions in His Word. Only a diligent and careful student of the Holy Scriptures can really understand the joy of discovery (comparable perhaps to finding a rich vein of gold in a great rock) and the instant response of thankful praise which such an experience generates.

But such motivation and such experience relates only to one who already either believes or is willing to believe the Bible. The

apparent contradictions of the Bible also serve the contrary purpose of exposing the rebellious hearts of unbelievers. A person may either use such passages as justification for his unbelief or as stimulation to faith, and his response merely reveals what manner of person he is. On the one hand, there are those "which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). On the other hand, there are those "which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (I Peter 2:8). The Word of God, and the one who witnesses thereof, is "to the one the savour of death unto death; and to the other, the savour of life unto life" (II Corinthians 2:16). A person should examine the way he reacts when he hears about some new problem which somebody professes to have found in the Bible. Does he experience a subtle feeling of release from the restraint of Scripture and of triumph over its proponents? Or does he rest in faith that there is a good solution to the problem and set about to find it? The Bible is a mirror with which one can examine both his own heart and those of others, and this fact is nowhere more clearly revealed than in the reaction triggered by the apparent problems of the Bible.

### Methods for Resolving the Discrepancies

Assuming the student really does desire to find a satisfactory solution to an apparent contradiction in the Bible, there are several guide lines which may help in his search. In almost every case, he will find that there does exist at least a possible plausible reconciliation of the problem. His solution may not satisfy the skeptic, but that becomes the skeptic's problem. If he has posed a supposed contradiction in the Bible as a reason for rejecting it, and he then is shown a possible solution which is consistent with all the facts (whether or not that solution can be proved to be the only correct solution), his continued rejection of the Bible merely demonstrates that this supposed contradiction was not his real problem after all. The burden of proof is on him to prove that the proposed reconciliation of the discrepancy is invalid. If he cannot show this, and if he nevertheless continues to reject the inspiration of the Bible, the skeptic openly

demonstrates that he is in rebellion against God. His problem is spiritual, not intellectual, and he can no longer hide under a cloak of pseudo-intellectualism. Perhaps this forced confrontation with his own deeper motives can be used by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate to him his own sinfulness and need of cleansing.

To find plausible solutions to the apparent discrepancies in Scripture, one can keep in mind the following suggestions. These are not rigid rules, nor is this an exhaustive list, but they are at least often helpful.

- ① (1) Study closely the context of the passage in question. One can indeed prove most anything from Scripture (or any other book, for that matter) by lifting statements out of context. "A text without a context is a pretext." If one examines carefully the circumstances, the reason for writing, the person addressed, the person doing the writing, the time of writing, prior and later developments, and other such factors, he will often find there is a perfectly valid explanation for what may seem to conflict with something written elsewhere under different circumstances and for different reasons. There is no conflict for example, between Genesis 1:31, where it is said that "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good" and Genesis 6:5, where it is said that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The difference in what God saw is explained by the different times and circumstances He was seeing. i.e.
- ② (2) Take into consideration the legitimate use of parabolic language and figures of speech. Much of the Bible (especially the book of Psalms, for example) is written in poetry, and the manner of conveying a given truth may be different in poetry than in a straightforward prose narrative. When David speaks of the Lord as his rock (Psalm 28:1), as his shepherd (Psalm 23:1), as his light (Psalm 27:1) and as his shield (Psalm 28:7), these are not contradictory descriptions. God is not literally, either a rock or a shepherd or a light or a shield, but, to the believer, He is symbolically all of these and much more. Skeptics make a practice of ridiculing i.e.

"literalists" by using references of this type. Actually, the literalist is one who believes the writer said what he *intended* to say, and does not try to intrude some alien figurative meaning of his own into the passage. When the writer clearly intended to convey a real fact by use of some figure of speech, he makes this clear in the context and by his manner of writing. This is true of secular writings and it is true of the Biblical writings. If the Bible scholar will simply try, as best he is able, to read the passage as the writer intended it to be read, he will find this approach will often reconcile any apparent disagreement with other passages.

12. (3) The full truth regarding a particular situation can often be appreciated only if the different aspects of that situation are emphasized separately. Thus an apparent contradiction between two doctrinal teachings (for example, the classic conflict between "election" passages of Scripture and the "whosoever" passages) may be merely the surface expressions of two aspects of a much broader concept incorporating all the activities of the infinite God in relation to finite man. Like the blind men, each attempting to describe an elephant he could touch, we may see only a very small portion of the full truth and need to recognize that the apparent paradox may be merely an extension of our own limitations.

12. (4) Some apparent discrepancies can be resolved by a critical examination of the particular translation or version. The doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration applies only to the original autographs, not to any specific translation and not to any specific copied manuscript. When difficulties are encountered, one of the first things to do is to try to ascertain, as closely as possible, whether the translation at hand really is expressing the original words and thoughts of the writer himself. The commandment "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13), for example, does not conflict with another commandment in the next chapter, "He that smiteth a man so that he die, shall be surely put to death" (Exodus 21:12), when one realizes that the word "kill" in Exodus 20:13 should better have been translated "murder." As far as copies are concerned, it is possible that copyists' errors may inadvertently have crept into the transmitted text of Scrip-

ture, especially in the case of numbers. The "variant readings" of the different manuscripts indeed demonstrate that this was the case. Whereas errors of copying or translation can always be considered as *possible* explanations of apparent difficulties, this explanation only rarely needs to be employed, and then usually only as a last resort unless clear evidence of a positive nature does in some way favor this explanation.

(5) The Bible was written for all people, not for scientists and scholars only. Therefore it frequently employs approximations and everyday terminology, rather than exact quantities and precise scientific notation. When a series of events is narrated, the order may be either chronological or pedagogical, depending on the particular contextual purpose of the passage. The ages of men, durations of reigns, and other such data, are normally rounded off to the nearest year, rather than to months or days, though there are exceptions. Problems that may arise from the use of such popular language are fully explicable in harmony with verbal inspiration in view of the fact that the purpose of the Holy Spirit was to communicate God's Word and truth to man in the precise form that the reader could best understand and utilize.

The above suggestions, while not intended to form a comprehensive guide, will normally suffice to lead the conscientious Bible student to a satisfactory solution of most apparent contradictions. The following sections give a few typical examples.

### Doctrinal Contradictions

One major class of apparent contradictions in Scripture has to do with doctrinal problems. One writer seems to emphasize a certain doctrinal principle, and another will stress an apparently contradictory principle.

Perhaps the most familiar example is the classic discrepancy between Paul and James on the matter of salvation by faith or works. Paul says: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9). James says: "Ye see

then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24)

This flagrant contradiction is easily resolved by application of suggestion (3) above, when the full passages in context are considered as in suggestion (1) above. Salvation is by faith, but saving faith inevitably is visibly expressed in works. James says: "I will show thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18). Paul says: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:10). One emphasizes the divine imputation, the other the human manifestation, but both are aspects of the whole truth regarding salvation. If there are no works, there is no salvation, but salvation is not earned by works. Salvation comes first, but if it is genuine, it is evidenced in works.

Another doctrinal difficulty involves God's immutability. According to I Samuel 15:29, God "is not a man that He should repent." Yet in the very same chapter, it was recorded that God has said: "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king" (I Samuel 15:11). This same conflict between God's unchangeableness and His changeableness recurs in various ways in a number of other Scriptures.

This difficulty is also easily resolved by recognizing that God's "repentance" is necessitated by God's immutability. As God, He cannot change in His attitude toward sin and righteousness, punishing the one and rewarding the other. An unrighteous man deserves and receives the judgment of God, but when the man repents, he is no longer the unrighteous man he was, and God now blesses and rewards him. God has not changed, the man has changed. To the outward appearance, however, God's dealings toward that man have changed. His relationship with that man has indeed changed, but this "changeability" in God's actions is itself the proof of the "non-changeability" of His character. God cannot "repent" in character, but He must and does repent in His actions toward individual men, and that for the very reason that His character "changeth not." It is understood also that God's repentance is really only the appearance of repentance, popular language for the purpose of more effectually communicating truth. Since He knows all things, Saul's change did not take Him by surprise.

Nevertheless, to the human eye, the change in His dealing with Saul obviously had the appearance of a change of mind toward Saul. Once God had chosen him as king, now he was rejecting him as king. This was the outward appearance of things, but actually there was no real change on God's part. His very holiness now required Him to curse the one He had blessed. Otherwise, there really would have been a change in the immutable God.

Another apparent contradiction that has often been charged against the Bible has to do with God's visibility or invisibility. The Scripture says: "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18), and also that God dwells "in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (I Timothy 6:16). Yet it also says: "And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exodus 33:11). Jacob said: "I have seen God face to face" (Genesis 32:30), after his experience at Peniel, and there are a number of other instances recorded in the Bible in which men are said to have seen God.

Since God in His essence is spirit (John 4:24) and is omnipresent, "filling all in all" (Ephesians 1:23), it is obvious that no finite man can actually see God with physical eyes. If God is everywhere, no one can really see Him as an entity distinct from His surroundings, since He is in those also. Nevertheless, because He is also omnipotent, He can do all things as well as fill all things. Thus He is able, as and when He chooses, to manifest Himself locally and temporally in whatever way He desires. Such a manifestation is called a "theophany." This theophanic presence of God is often identified as "the angel of the Lord" (e.g., in Judges 6:12,22; 13:20-22, etc.).

Furthermore, the doctrine of the Trinity recognizes that, though God is one God, He is also in three persons. The Father is "invisible" (I Timothy 1:17), as is the Holy Spirit, but God the Son manifests God to man. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). Whenever God has, in some finite, corporeal way, shown Himself to man's physical senses, it has been as the Second Person of the Godhead. Thus, although no man can see God in His omnipresence,



many men have seen, and all men shall see (Revelation 1:7) God as He reveals Himself in His only begotten Son.

### Ethical Contradictions

There do appear also to be a considerable number of discrepancies of a moral and ethical nature in the Bible. Certain practices are commended or commanded under some circumstances, forbidden and condemned under others.

For example, capital punishment is authorized and even required in Genesis 9:6: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Yet God's commandment says: "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). It is very clear, however, that the commandment applies solely to murder, one man killing another on his own initiative, taking the law as it were into his own hands. This, God forbids. The government, however, representing God in maintaining order and righteousness in human societies, has both the authorization and responsibility to enforce capital punishment under the terms established by God. A soldier or an executioner, acting under proper orders, is not breaking this commandment when he represents the governmental authority in carrying out this responsibility.

Many have puzzled over David's relation to God. God said: "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will" (Acts 13:22). Yet David was guilty of adultery and, indirectly, of murder, as well as other acts of disobedience. The Bible says: "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (II Samuel 11:27). God said to David: "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight?" (II Samuel 12:9).

The changed circumstances explain this apparent contradiction. God by no means excused David's various sins. Rather, He punished him severely because of them. There were grave moral lapses on David's part; nevertheless, David's heart toward God was fundamentally right, and that is what God seeks (II Chronicles 16:9) above everything else. This was demonstrated in David's strong faith in God's Word, under the most difficult circumstances (e.g., Goliath, his attempted murder by Saul, the rebellion of his son Absalom, etc.). Even more clearly, however, was it demonstrated in the midst of David's condemnation itself.

When most people are caught in an act of sin and are criticized or condemned for it, they respond defensively, in anger or self-justification, if not outright denial. When David was accused, however, he in repentance confessed his sin (II Samuel 12:13; 24:10), and God forgave him, even though he still had to suffer its consequences. He later wrote: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah" (Psalm 32:5). It is not the self-righteous man, but the repentant and humble man, who truly reaches the heart of God.

The so-called "imprecatory psalms" have troubled many people. In these, David and other writers invoke trouble and cursing on their enemies, as well as upon the wicked in general. There are many such passages. One typical imprecation is Psalm 58:6,10: "Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth. . . . The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked." Another is Psalm 6:10: "Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly." Even the souls under the altar, in Revelation 6:10, are said to cry out: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

And yet Jesus said: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Two important factors must enter into the proper evaluation of the Biblical teaching on vengeance and forgiveness. First, we must remember that vengeance belongs to God (Romans 12:19) and that it is God's intention to exercise this vengeance in His own good time. Jesus said: "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?" (Luke 18:7). Since it is God's will to avenge all injustice and wickedness, especially as exercised upon His own people because of their stand for His Word, and since He exhorts us to pray according to His will (I John 5:14), it is right to pray that His judgment be visited upon the ungodly.

Second, the Lord also teaches that forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance, both on the divine level and on the human level. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). The same principle applies on the human level. Jesus said: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:15-17).

Thus, even in the ranks of believers, forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance. "Take heed to yourselves; If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). At the same time, even though there be no repentance, and therefore no forgiveness, Christians are exhorted to "pray for them which despitefully use you" (Matthew 5:44). Forgiveness without repentance, when God's laws are involved, is as unwarranted in man as it is impossible with God. It is good for Christians to "love your enemies," with that love which earnestly desires their salvation or restoration, but not with a pseudo-"love" which is an excuse for weakness and tolerance of evil.

Finally, with respect to those who are true enemies of God and who, despite prayer and importunity, persist in their hatred of God and His people, it is only expressive of God's own viewpoint, shared by His people through the indwelling Holy Spirit, that the believer may well pray an imprecatory prayer. "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Psalm 139:21,22).

It is not contradictory, therefore, but quite consistent, for a God-fearing man both to pray *for his* enemies and to pray *against* God's enemies. It is good to "turn the other cheek," so long as it is a personal injury to oneself which is involved, rather than a divine principle. It is also right to see and judge, by the indwelling Spirit, men and events in the way God sees them.

This no doubt is the Biblical meaning of the imprecatory psalms.

Another often-mentioned ethical contradiction has to do with the story of Jephthah's daughter. Jephthah had vowed that, if God would give him victory over the Ammonites, "Whatsoever cometh forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (Judges 11:31). God, of course, in other passages, strongly condemns and forbids the offering of human sacrifices (e.g., Deuteronomy 12:30, 31, etc.).

There is no doubt that, if Jephthah actually sacrificed his daughter in the fire, it was a crime, regardless of his vow. The Bible does not say God approved of this vow in any way nor, for that matter, does it say that Jephthah actually carried through the fiery sacrifice, though it does say that he "did with her according to his vow" (Judges 11:39). The Law did require that, when vows were made, they were to be kept (Numbers 30:2).

There is a strong possibility that, instead of dying, however, she was offered as a different kind of sacrifice, remaining a virgin the rest of her life. It is said that she and her companions "bewailed her virginity" (Judges 11:38) rather than her death. Since she was Jephthah's only child (11:34), this meant his entire house would die without descendants, and so was indeed a real sacrifice for both him and his daughter.

Long before, God had honored Abraham's faith by providing him a ram to offer up "for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son" (Genesis 22:13). Perhaps He accepted a similar substitute in Jephthah's case, along with the perpetual virginity of his only child, in satisfaction of his vow (Numbers 30:2). This indeed was the very principle of the sacrifice of the firstborn (Exodus 13:2), for which the lamb, slain and burnt with fire, provided an acceptable substitute, with the dedication of the firstborn to God.

### Factual Contradictions

Probably the most difficult of the apparent contradictions in the Bible are those which deal with matters of fact, rather than matters of doctrine or practice. Nevertheless, though there may

be some that have not been adequately resolved, the great majority of these have been found, when examined closely by conservative scholars, to have satisfactory answers.

1.2 One of the most famous of these supposed contradictions is found in the first two chapters of Genesis. The first chapter makes it quite plain that all of the animals had been created before Adam and Eve were created. However, in Chapter Two we are told that ". . . out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them" (Genesis 2:19). It thus seems that Adam was already living when the animals were formed.

\* This problem arises, however, merely from an inadequate translation. There is no difference in the Hebrew between the translation "formed" and "had formed." The context governs the form of the verb rendering. That is, it is quite legitimate to translate the verse: ". . . out of the ground the Lord God *had formed* every beast of the field." When rendered in this way, the verse offers no contradiction at all to Genesis One.

1.2 Skeptics have also quibbled about whether "the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh" (Exodus 9:12) or whether Pharaoh himself "hardened his heart and hearkened not unto them" (Exodus 8:15). Both statements are true. Pharaoh volitionally hardened his own heart and refused God's command. Yet also God hardened his heart by commanding him to do what He knew he would refuse to do, thus compelling him as it were to make his choice of obedience or disobedience.

1.2 Another widely acclaimed discrepancy is the problem of Cain's wife. Immediately after Cain murdered his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8), God banished him to the land of Nod, where he "knew his wife . . . and he builded a city" (Genesis 4:17). This is supposed to be a glaring contradiction, since no one else except Adam and Eve were living at that time.

This supposition is unwarranted. The Bible does not say when these events took place. Elsewhere it says that Adam "begat sons and daughters" (Genesis 5:4) and that Eve was "the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). There was certainly no "pre-Adamic" tribe in the vicinity, since Adam was "the first man" (I Corinthians 15:45,47). In order for man to fulfill God's

command to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28), it obviously was necessary for this process to begin with the union of one or more of Adam's sons with one or more of his daughters. Such close unions were perfectly safe genetically in the beginning, even though later the accumulation of genetic mutations over many generations would make them sufficiently dangerous so that actual legal prohibitions against incest (Leviticus 18:6) had to be imposed by God.

\* Thus, Cain either married one of his sisters or a descendant of one of his sisters. Since he, like the other antediluvians, presumably lived for hundreds of years, a large population could easily have developed in the world during Cain's lifetime. God in fact specifically protected Cain against being killed by other men (Genesis 4:15), thus assuring him a long life, with ample time to establish his own family and civilization. Centuries later, of course, after the Flood, God instituted the system of human government and capital punishment (Genesis 9:6).

There are many more or less trivial apparent discrepancies in the Old Testament historical books. Except for the question of plenary inspiration, these would be of little concern to anyone. They do, as noted before, help demonstrate the absence of collusion or forgery in the writings. However, it will also be found, on closer examination, that there are always possible and reasonable ways of harmonizing them.

For example, I Chronicles 20:5 says that "Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear staff was like a weaver's beam." The parallel passage in II Samuel 21:19 says "Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim/a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam." The contradiction arises from the fact that the words "the brother of" have been supplied by the translators, appearing in italics in the King James Version. Thus, Samuel says Elhanan slew Goliath, whereas the Chronicler, who wrote later, says he slew the brother of Goliath. Liberal scholars have discredited the story of the slaying of Goliath by David on the basis of that verse in Samuel.

One possible solution to this problem would be to assume there were two giants named Goliath, one of whom was slain by David. The other was then slain by Elhanan, who also slew his



brother. There were two Elhanans of Bethlehem (II Samuel 23:24), so why not two Goliaths of Gath? It is more likely, however, that the translators were perfectly correct in interpolating "the brother of" in II Samuel 21:19, as the more explicit and complete reference in 1 Chronicles 20:5 indicates plainly that Elhanan slew Goliath's brother, rather than Goliath himself. It has been argued very effectively by Old Testament scholars that the apparent discrepancy in this case with II Samuel 21:19 arose by a copyist's error in the latter. One other possibility, with some support in Jewish tradition, is that Elhanan was another name for David and Jair another name for Jesse. In any case, there is certainly no *proof* of a contradiction.

10. Numerous discrepancies have been imagined in the accounts of the life of Christ found in the four Gospels. Several of these have already been discussed in previous chapters — the two genealogies in Matthew and Luke, the apparently different reports of the sermon on the mount, the two accounts of the temptation of Christ, the events at the resurrection, and others. The differences are always superficial, with an underlying harmony which testifies to both the sincerity of the writers and the factuality of their testimonies.

12. One particular discrepancy, over which skeptics have made a great deal of fuss, is the question of the superscription placed on Jesus' cross at the crucifixion. These are listed as follows:

Matthew 27:37 "This is Jesus the King of the Jews"

Mark 15:26 "The King of the Jews"

Luke 23:38 "This is the King of the Jews"

John 19:19 "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"

These are all slightly different in wording, and yet obviously refer to the same inscription. Actually, as John tells us (19:20), there were three inscriptions, in Hebrew, Latin and Greek, and it is possible they were each slightly different, since the essential statement in each case would be simply "The King of the Jews," giving the charge under which He was being executed. Matthew would be likely to record the Hebrew inscription, Mark the Latin, and John the Greek, considering the readers for whom they were writing. Luke perhaps combined them. Or, possibly, the complete inscription was "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" and each writer only recorded a portion of it.

He would still be perfectly correct then in what he *did* record, since he did not claim to give the *complete* superscription.

Although this chapter could be expanded indefinitely, we have at least considered the major alleged contradictions of the Bible and suggested ways for resolving them. No matter what additional discrepancies might be suggested from time to time by the liberals, we are confident that satisfactory explanations can always be found if we study them carefully and empathetically. The Bible does not contradict itself, and still stands as the fully authoritative and verbally inspired Word of God.

### SELECTED BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

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