

DIFFICULTIES, PROBLEM TEXTS AND “SUPPOSED” CONTRADICTIONS OF THE HOLY BIBLE

- I. PEOPLE FIND DIFFICULTIES, PROBLEM TEXTS AND CONTRADICTIONS IN THE HOLY BIBLE BECAUSE THEY DO NOT TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT ALL THE VERSES INVOLVED.
- A. A Bible **Difficulty** Happens When the Information in a Passage Does not Appear to Make Sense.
 - B. A **Problem Text** Happens when the Information in One or More Verses Does not Agree with the Information in another Text.
 - C. A **Contradiction** Happens when two Statements Are Found to Be Opposite to one Another.
 - D. Most Difficulties, Problem Texts or Supposed Contradictions that People Find in the Bible Can Be Solved by Paying close Attention to the Words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 22:29, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures....”
- II. THE FOLLOWING VERSES APPEAR TO BE A CONTRADICTION, PROBLEM TEXT OR BIBLE DIFFICULTY:
- A. Genesis 1:26 and Isaiah 40:18, 25**
- 1. Genesis one states that man was made in God’s image, but Isaiah says that there is no one like or equal to God.
 - 2. There is no difficulty, problem text or contradiction and both statements are true.
 - a. The Holy Bible states that man was created in God’s image and glory in Genesis 1:26 and 1 Corinthians 11:7. However, man is not equal to God because man does not have God’s characteristics (omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, etc.).
 - b. Man’s image is a three-part image made up of a spirit, a soul and a body according to 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

- c. Since man is made in God's image, then God also has a three-part image. This image is made up of a Spirit (the Holy Spirit) (2 Cor 3:17; Acts 5:3-4), a Soul, a spiritual body that cannot be seen (John 5:37; Col 1:15), (God the Father) (Mat 11:25-27), and a Body (God the Son – Acts 2:36; Rom 10:9; John 20:28). Notice that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all called both "Lord" and "God," but in Isaiah 43:10 and 44:6 God said there was no other god besides Himself.
- d. There is no one like or equal to God (Isa 40:18, 25). However, Jesus Christ is said to be the very **image**, or likeness, of God in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:13-15 (cf. John 14:9). Christ is even said to be **equal** with God in Philippians 2:5-6 (cf. John 5:18; 10:30).

B. **Genesis 6:3 and Genesis 9:29**

1. Genesis 6 states that the days of man shall be 120 years, but Genesis 9 says that Noah lived 950 years.
2. There is no difficulty, problem or contradiction and both statements are true.
 - a. In Genesis 6, God predicted that in the future man's days would be shortened to 120 years.
 - b. God's statement in Genesis 6:3 did not apply to Noah and his family because they were already living when God shortened men's lives (Gen 5:32; 6:9-13).
 - c. After the flood, men lived different lengths of time until the earth was repopulated (Gen 9:1).
 - 1) Shem lived 600 years (Gen 11:10-11).
 - 2) Arphaxad lived 438 years (Gen 11:12-13).
 - 3) Serug lived 230 years (Gen 11:22-23).
 - 4) Nahor lived 148 years (Gen 11:24-25).
 - d. After the earth was populated, God allowed some men to live longer than others because of His grace.
 - 1) Jacob lived 147 years (Gen 47:28).
 - 2) Joseph lived 110 years (Gen 50:26).
 - 3) Moses lived 120 years (Deu 34:7).
 - 4) Joshua lived 110 years (Jos 24:29).
 - e. God again shortened the days of man to be about seventy or eighty years (Psa 90:10).

C. **Exodus 4:22 and Jeremiah 31:9**

1. In Exodus it states that Israel is God's "firstborn," but Jeremiah says that Ephraim is God's *firstborn*.

2. There is no difficulty, problem or contradiction and both statements are true.
 - a. The term “firstborn” has two meanings: (1) the very first child born to a man and woman (Mat 1:24-25) and (2) the blessing or right of inheritance that the firstborn child is supposed to be given (Deu 21:15-17).
 - b. The nation of Israel was chosen by God over all the other nations (Deu 27:9; 28:1) and, therefore, was given the name of “the firstborn” (Exo 4:22).
 - c. Ephraim was not the firstborn son of Joseph but was given the blessing of the firstborn (Gen 48:13-14, 17-20), just as the nation of Israel (the Jews) was not the first nation (Gen 10:5) but God gave it the blessing of the firstborn (Exo 4:22).
 - d. The name *Israel* can represent either the ten northern tribes of Israel (1 Kgs 11:35, 37) or all twelve tribes of Israel (Gen 49:28).
 - e. The name *Ephraim* can also represent either the one tribe of Ephraim (Num 1:33) or the ten northern tribes of Israel (2 Chr 25:5-7; Isa 7:9; Jer 31:9).
 - f. The two names “Israel” and “Ephraim” are both used by God to represent His firstborn nation (the Jews), whether He is speaking of one, ten or all twelve tribes of Israel.

D. 2nd Samuel 8:4 and 1st Chronicles 18:4

1. In Samuel it states that David took from the King of Zobah one thousand chariots and seven hundred horsemen, but in Chronicles it states that David took one thousand chariots and seven thousand horsemen.
2. There is no difficulty, problem or contradiction and both statements are true.
 - a. Samuel gives the number of horsemen that drove the Syrian chariots (700 in battle and 300 in reserve), but Chronicles gives the total number of men assigned to all the chariots (ten men to each chariot).
 - b. This would allow for each chariot to have some spare horses and spare personnel assigned to them to replace the dead, wounded and tired horses and horsemen.

E. 2nd Samuel 10:18 and 1st Chronicles 19:18

1. In Samuel it states that David killed the men of 700 chariots, but in Chronicles it states that David killed 7,000 men which fought in chariots.
2. There is no contradiction, problem or difficulty.

- a. Samuel states that there were 700 chariots with fighting men in them, but Chronicles states that there were 7,000 men in those 700 chariots.
- b. There were ten men in each chariot. This is similar to our modern day armored personnel carrier; each one may carry ten to twenty men in full combat gear.

F. 2nd Samuel 6:23 and 2nd Samuel 21:8

- 1. Is the mother of the five children “Michal” or is it “Merab” ?
- 2. There is no difficulty, problem or contradiction and either reading is correct.
 - a. Michal and Merab were both daughters of Saul. Michal was the younger and Merab the elder according to 1st Samuel 14:49.
 - b. Michal was the wife of King David and had no children of her own according to 2nd Samuel 6:23.
 - c. Merab was the wife of Adriel according to 1st Samuel 18:19 and had five children.
 - d. Since Michal “brought up” children for Adriel (2 Sam 21:8), Merab must have died and Michal was raising them as their foster mother.

G. 2nd Samuel 23:8 and 1st Chronicles 11:11

- 1. In Samuel it states that the Tachmonite was chief and slew 800 men at one time, but Chronicles says that a Hachmonite was chief and slew 300 men.
- 2. There is no difficulty, problem or contradiction and both statements are correct.
- 3. The context of these verses and the names of the Chiefs (captains) of David’s mighty men (commanders) are found in 2nd Samuel 23:8-39 and 1st Chronicles 11:10-47. The listings of these *chiefs* vary; Samuel lists thirty-seven of David’s top military commanders but Chronicles lists more. This difference resulted because they were written at different times and the names do not agree because some of the men left the army while others joined up.
- 4. There appears to be a contradiction between these two accounts because they are not thoroughly compared (checked for likenesses and differences).
 - a. This also happens when the listings of names in the New Testament are not compared.
 - b. The listings of the Twelve Apostles’ names found in Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:13-16 and Acts 1:13 (cf. Acts 1:2, 12) do not match. These listings need to be compared since there appears to be a contradiction between them.

- 1) By checking the likenesses of the listings, one finds that nine of the twelve names match (Simon Peter, Andrew, James of Zebedee, John of Zebedee, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew and James the son of Alphaeus).
 - 2) By checking the differences of the listings, one finds the following: Judas Iscariot is not listed in Acts 1:13 because he was already dead (Mat 27:3-5; Acts 1:15-18), Lebbaeus surnamed Thaddeus (Mark 3:18) is also called “Judas the brother of James” (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13) and Simon the Canaanite is also called “Simon called Zelotes “(Luke 6:15).
5. The following facts need to be considered when comparing Samuel and Chronicles:
- a. Neither the Commander in Chief (King David – 2 Sam 11:1) nor the Commanding General of the Whole Army (Joab – 2 Sam 8:16) is mentioned in the context of the passages in question (see 3. above).
 - b. In 2nd Samuel 23:8, 9, 11 the **first three** captains of David’s army are given as being Adino, Eleazar and Shammah. The chief (head) of these first three is said to be Adino (2 Sam 23:8).
 - c. In 1st Chronicles 11:11 Jashobeam is said to be chief of the first three captains, like a Field Marshall is over all other generals.
 - d. There are several listings of groups of three in these two passages that had men in them which were not one of the first three captains and some were in several different groups of three.
 - 1) In 2nd Samuel 23:13-20 and 1st Chronicles 11:15-25, three of the thirty chief men (captains) are mentioned. These included Benaiah and Abishai, with Abishai being their chief (head, leader).
 - 2) In 2nd Samuel 23:18-19 and 1st Chronicles 11:20-21, Abishai is said to be chief and most honorable **among** three captains.
 - 3) In 2nd Samuel 23:22-23 and 1st Chronicles 11:24-25, Benaiah is said to have the name (was chief or head) **among** three mighty men, but he was not as honorable (not as high in rank) as the first three (see 5.b. above).
 - e. From the above information one can conclude the following:
 - 1) Jashobeam the Hachmonite was the **chief** and field commander over all of David’s mighty men, but Joab was the Commanding General over the whole army of Israel (including Jashobeam) (see 5.c above).
 - 2) Adino the Eznite was the Tachmonite who was the **chief**, or head, of the top three commanders under Jashobeam (see 5.b. above).

6. Another possibility is to remember that the son of the head of a family can have both his father's family name and his grandfather's family name as in Numbers 3:19 and 27 (cf. 1 Tim 1:4), and the variation in number of men killed can be attributed to describing two separate battles or skirmishes.

H. **2nd Samuel 24:1 and 1st Chronicles 21:1**

1. In Samuel it states that God moved David, but in Chronicles it says that Satan provoked (moved) David to number (count) the people of Israel.
2. There is no difficulty, problem or contradiction and both statements are correct.
3. God often uses others to do His will.
 - a. In 1st Kings 22:14-23, God used Satan to punish the Jews (2 Thes 2:10-12).
 - b. In Jeremiah 43:8-13, God used the Babylonian Army to punish the Egyptians. Notice that in Jeremiah 43:10-11 God says "my servant" (King Nebuchadrezzar) will smite Egypt. It is God (the "I" of Jer 43:12) Who actually used King Nebuchadrezzar to smite Egypt instead of doing it Himself.
4. From the above information, one can conclude that God used Satan to provoke David to number the people of Israel.

I. **2nd Samuel 24:13 and 1st Chronicles 21:11-12**

1. In Samuel seven years of famine are offered to David as a choice, but in Chronicles three years of famine are offered.
2. There is no difficulty, problem or contradiction and there are several possible answers for the differences in years:
 - a. The Prophet Gad may have talked to David more than once and given him different choices each time before David finally decided.
 - b. The three years of famine may have been a famine for the whole region and not just "in thy land" (the land of Israel) (2 Sam 24:13). If the famine were just in Israel, they could buy food from the surrounding friendly countries (Gen 41:56 to 42:2). However, if the famine were in the whole region, three years would have had the same effect on Israel.
 - c. The seven years of famine may also have been taking into account the famine that Israel has just gone through (2 Sam 21:1). Up to the time that the Prophet Gad spoke to David, four years had passed since the famine of 2nd Samuel 21 had gone into effect, and three more years would make a total of seven years of famine.

J. 1st Kings 4:26 and 2nd Chronicles 9:25

1. In Kings there are 40,000 stalls given, but in Chronicles there are only 4,000 stalls.
2. There is no difficulty, problem or contradiction and both statements are true.
 - a. Kings gives the total number of the stalls for all of his horses and Chronicles gives the number of stalls for his chariots.
 - b. Each chariot had spare horses in case of injuries and there are ten horses assigned to each chariot (Rev 9:9).

K. 1st Kings 7:26 and 2nd Chronicles 4:5

1. In Kings it states that the molten sea contains 2,000 baths, but in Chronicles it says it holds 3,000 baths.
2. There is no difficulty, problem or contradiction and both statements are true.
3. Kings gives the amount that it **actually contained** while Chronicles gives the total amount that it **could hold** if it were filled to the very top.

L. 2nd Kings 8:26 and 2nd Chronicles 22:2

1. In Kings Ahaziah is said to be twenty-two years old when he began to reign, but in Chronicles he is said to be forty-two years old when he began to reign.
2. There is no difficulty, problem or contradiction and both statements are true.
 - a. In 2nd Chronicles 22:2, the phrase “forty and two years old” is an idiom (expression) used for saying that Ahaziah was a son of forty-two years.
 - 1) The expression “a son of forty-two years” represents the dynasty of Omri.
 - 2) This dynasty began in 924 B.C. (1 Kgs 16:23), continued through the reign of Ahab (1 Kgs 16:29) and the ascension of Ahaziah to the throne in 881 B.C. (2 Chr 22:2), which comes to forty-three years.
 - 3) This one-year difference can be accounted for by taking into consideration the time of year a king ascended to the throne. Sometimes a half-year (more or less) was not even counted while at other times a half-year (more or less) was counted as a full year.
 - b. In 2nd Kings 8:28, King Ahaziah is said to be twenty-two years old, which is the forty-second year of Omri’s Dynasty.

M. 2nd Kings 24:8 and 2nd Chronicles 36:9

1. In Kings it states that Jehoichin is eighteen years old when he begins to reign, but in Chronicles he is said to be eight years old when he begins to reign.
2. There is no difficulty, problem or contradiction and both statements are true.
3. The following facts need to be considered when comparing Kings and Chronicles:
 - a. In 2nd Kings 23:36 and 2nd Chronicles 36:5, Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign as King of Judah and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.
 - b. In 2nd Chronicles 36:9, Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign as King of Judah, but only reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem.
 - c. In 2nd Chronicles 36:8, Jehoiachin is said to reign as King of Judah in his father's place.
 - d. In 2nd Kings 24:6, Jehoiakim died and his son Jehoiachin reigned in his place (along with his mother Nehushta the queen – 2 Kgs 24:8).
 - e. In 2nd Kings 24:8, Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign in Jerusalem, which only lasted for three months.
 - f. In 2nd Kings 24:12, Jehoiachin was taken captive in the eighth year of his reign as King of Judah.
4. From the above facts, we can conclude the following:
 - a. Jehoiakim anointed Jehoiachin, his eight-year-old son, as King of Judah just before they were deported to Babylon in case Jehoiakim was killed.
 - b. Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin both reigned for two years together as King of Judah in Babylon, just as David and his son Solomon were reigning as King of Judah both at the same time (1 Kgs 1:41-48).
 - c. Jehoiakim died while in captivity in Babylon and his son Jehoiachin, about ten years old, began to reign in Babylon as the only King of Judah.
 - d. When Jehoiachin was eighteen years old, he and his mother the queen were released from captivity and returned to Jerusalem to sit on the throne, eight years after Jehoiakim's death.
 - e. Jehoiachin reigned alone as King of Judah while in Babylon for eight years, but only reigned in Jerusalem for three months before he rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar and was deported back to Babylon.

III. MOST DIFFICULTIES, PROBLEM TEXTS AND SUPPOSED CONTRADICTIONS IN THE HOLY BIBLE CAN BE ANSWERED.

- A By knowing All of the Scripture Passages in Question (Mat 22:29).
- B. By Obeying the Command to Study and rightly Divide the Bible (2 Tim 2:15)
- C. By giving God the Benefit of any Doubt (Rom 3:4).