
flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Kevin Brown - 2009/09/09 16:28

I am a believer in Christianity who is seeking a way out because I am having great difficulty taking the doctrine of eternal damnation of the many (which is clearly taught in scripture). Since my religious experience is in line with what the Bible teaches, the only honest way I can see to do this is to 'prove' the bible is in error. So I have been looking at some web stuff relating to the errancy of the Bible... And I have not found anything that can be called a major error or contradiction. Let me give a couple of examples of alleged errors and contradictions which are only useful for one who presupposes the Bible is in error. King Zedekiah from Je 34:4-5 and JE 52:10-11 ? I'm surprised this is even in the list. The prophecy was that he would not die by the sword but would die in peace. O.K. dying in prison after one's sons eyes have been put out is not my idea of peaceful either, but let's face it, the God of the Bible makes his own rules and has his own idea of peace... The fact is Zed did not die by the sword. 1SA 21:1-6 Ahimalech was high priest when David ate the bread. MK 2:26 Abiathar was high priest at the time. The Christian anti anti Bible websites say that this is not a problem since Abiathar was Ahimalech's son. Don't know much about it, but it seems plausible, I guess. MT 27:28 Jesus is given a scarlet robe (a sign of infamy). MK 15:17, JN 19:2 A purple robe (a sign of royalty). This really is nitpicking, isn't it? MT 27:44 Both of those who are crucified with Jesus taunt him. LK 23:39-42 Only one taunts Jesus, and he is rebuked by the other for doing so. So they both taunt him, then one stops and defends Jesus. Am I nuts or is this a plausible reading of the text? MT 27:48, LK 23:36, JN 19:29 Jesus was offered vinegar to drink. MK 15:23 It was wine and myrrh, and he did not drink it. JN 19:29-30 Whatever it was, he did drink it. So Jesus was offered wine and he did not drink it, then he was offered vinegar and he did drink it? Does each of the Gospel accounts have to give 'all' details? MT 27:54 The centurion says: Truly this was the son of God. MK 15:39 He says: Truly this man was the son of God! LK 23:47 He says: Truly this man was innocent (or righteous). LoL. MT 27:55, MK 15:40, LK 23:49 The women looked on from afar. JN 19:25-26 They were near enough that Jesus could speak to his mother. Jesus yelled? The women were afar, then his mother came closer? MT 24:9 Even some of the disciples of Jesus will be killed. JN 8:51 If anyone keeps Jesus' words, he will never see death. HE 9:27 men die once, then judgment follows. Anyone who has been a christian will understand why this is silly. MT 28:1 It was toward dawn when they arrived. MK 16:2 It was after sunrise. LK 24:1 It was at early dawn. JN 20:1 It was still dark. One has to stretch a bit to get that meaning into Mt 28:1. It could mean that, or it could mean they left 'when it was still dark'. The point I'm trying to make is that so many errors listed on websites are misunderstandings or stretches. What are the 'best' errors and/or contradictions you've seen in the Bible? What are the 'best' websites and books for this sort of thing? BTW, if you bring up minor things, like wrong dates for deaths of kings, etc, christians will just say, well that's a copyist error or it's due to the different way the jews kept time, and is unimportant because it does not affect doctrine. Thanks for any help, Kevin

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by James Goodfellow - 2009/09/09 16:28

The problem is that there is no absolute way to disprove the Bible, nor is there a absolute way to prove it. One has to look at the evidence. There is a great body of arguments that 'explain' why there are apparent contradictions and discrepancies. Sometimes they are as simple as a scribal error and others as complicated as explaining why Jesus's dad had two different dads. In the end, one can appeal that God did it and there is no absolute way to prove or disprove this. Evidence is the only way. How can so many contradictions exist. How can so many times statements in the bible have to be taken 'spiritually' or 'as a figure of speech' so as not to offend science or sensibility. How many times have theology changed to meets fashion or new discoveries. In the end, all one can assume is the Bible is not without errors. Jim

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Steve Gray - 2009/09/09 16:28

I am a believer in Christianity who is seeking a way out because I am having great difficulty taking the doctrine of eternal damnation of the many (which is clearly taught in scripture). Since my religious experience is in line with what the Bible teaches, the only honest way I can see to do this is to 'prove' the bible is in error. GRAY: Major errors? How about when Jesus said God's kingdom will be established within the lifetime of some of those in his audience at the time? (In other words before about 80 C.E.) Apologists make up excuses for this, including giving the Greek word genea a false and incorrect meaning. But Jesus said exactly what I wrote above. Variants of it appear in about 10 places in the NT.

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Patrick A. Wilber - 2009/09/09 16:28

Hello Kevin, I would also say that I am an Bible believing Christian, yet I will here explore one of the greatest challenges I have seen for the Christian faith and/or the Bible. Kevin Brown wrote : I am a believer in Christianity who is seeking a way out because I am : having great difficulty taking the doctrine of eternal damnation of the : many (which is clearly taught in scripture). Since my religious : experience is in line with what the Bible teaches, the only honest way I : can see to do this is to 'prove' the bible is in error. Some of the other hard things to swallow are that God told Abraham to kill his son, even though he prevented it in the end. Another, that God told the Isrealites to commit Genocide in the Old Testament. Yet another, is the harlot Rahab, who by LYING assisted the Isrealites, and is in Hebrews 11 heralded as an example of faith. Or maybe you dislike the fate of Uzza, who in an act of goodwill tried to save the ark of the covenant from falling off of a cart. God killed him for that. How about Job? God allowed Satan to crush Job, take away his family, torture Job, turn his friends and wife against him. As a well-studied Christian, I can probably come up with a better and bigger list than most! Wait! God didn't directly harm Job, he merely allowed it. Oh yes, this is true but it touches on what I think is the greatest difficulty with most any monotheistic religion. It is known as The problem of Evil . It goes something like this: (1) God is omnipotent. (2) God is omniscient. (3) God is perfectly good. (4) Evil exists in the world. From (1), (2) & (3), since God is all good, he would and could not create any evil. Evil exists in the world which God created, so is such a God real? The typical response is the so-called free will defense that states that God did not create the world with evil, some creatures (like humans and Satan) used their free-will to introduce evil into the world. God's perfection of creation had to allow that free-will to happen. Reply: (5) God knew what his created beings would choose, before he created them (omniscient). (6) God could have created everything in such a way that his created beings would not choose to introduce evil (omnipotent) (7) Therefore, God is responsible for evil, and (1), (2) & (3) contradict (4) Another line of attack: (8) Since God is perfectly good, God would not (want to) allow evil in his goodness. (9) Because God is omnipotent, God could prevent all evil choices from happening. (10) God would want to prevent all evil from happening, according to his character. (11) Evil exists, so God is either not (1), or God is not (2), or God is not (3). By now, you should be thinking that this is pretty hefty stuff coming from a Bible believing Christian! I must be a lunatic, radical, or something like that, to still believe in Christianity! More to this later... : So I have been looking at some web stuff relating to the errancy of the : Bible... And I have not found anything that can be called a major error : or contradiction. Let me give a couple of examples of alleged errors and : contradictions which are only useful for one who presupposes the Bible : is in error. All of the contradictions you mention are only technical contradictions. These pale in light of philosophical contradictions, like the one I have mentioned. Imagine this scenario. Four people see a car accident. They are later asked to give a report to the police. Although the main thrust (heart) of thier stories seem to coincide, there are many technical differences in thier descriptions. One person talks about a red jeep hitting a blue car. Another about a red Explorer hitting a blue Thunderbird. Two witnesses even contradict on the issue whether the Thunderbird went through the intersection on red or orange. Another two contradict on whether the Driver of the Explorer was male or female. This is not uncommon! Especially for historical accounts that were compiled centuries later, as you find them in the Bible. So is the Bible not the inerrant word of God? I can say yes. How? As much as the total inerrantists may want to believe, one will find some technical indiscrepancies in the Bible. Nonetheless, there is something that is virtually unaffected. That is the heart (thrust of) the message in the Bible. This is what is important to God (see Jesus emphasis on the inner) and should be important to us. Another thing to realize, is that Israel was primarily an oral culture. They had some scribes to compile thier oral reports. Yet, research shows that oral cultures will emphasize and even re-arrange different technical details of their stories to better emphasize the main point (heart) of what they are trying to communicate. So, back to the heart. What about the philosophical cantradictions I have given above? : What are the 'best' errors and/or contradictions you've seen in the : Bible? What are the 'best' websites and books for this sort of thing? : BTW, if you bring up minor things, like wrong dates for deaths of kings, : etc, christians will just say, well that's a copyist error or it's due : to the different way the jews kept time, and is unimportant because it : does not affect doctrine. Kevin, I will leave you hanging with the answer to the problem of evil . I am sure someone else will come along and give you a good defense (I could also). However, my main point is different. I have just used the above to lead to this main point, like I would in any good oral culture. The heart of my message is this: You will easily find contradictions, hard things to swallow, not least things you do not like in EVERY form of faith that you hold on to. What do I mean by this? No matter what you take to believe of this world, you will necessarily base it on some kind of faith! You will not be able to prove any world view, since we are too limited to do so. Say, you put your faith (=trust in) atheism. Well, then you must accept that everything, including life, is meaningless, since only a Who can give it meaning. And without an eternal Who (i.e. God), who gives everything an eternal meaning, there is no absolute meaning. It just is. What about evolution. Well, survival of the fittest. If I can outsmart, outwit, outperform you and can beat you at anything, then evolution gives me the right to do so (by any means I can, ... cheating, killing are allowed, if I can live and get away with them). What about many eastern religions that teach that life is basically futile. We are doomed to almost eternal rebirth. Suffering will just be the main part of it. Maybe, one day in almost eternity, we will break the chain of rebirth and be able to just be nothing (or everything). Certainly not an individual anymore, since this is what causes suffering. You do not need a reason to abandon Christianity, Kevin. You are a Christian by faith. You can just stop trusting in it (or in Jesus), and start trusting in something else (like yourself)! But, for one thing I applaud you, you seem to try to find the world-view that is most worthy of your faith! Oh, one more thing. Since we are bound to put our faith in something, how does faith prove itself? If you want to find which world-view is most worthy of your faith, then ponder this last question. How does faith prove

itself? I am a Christian, by proven faith, Patrick.

flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by autismuk - 2009/09/09 16:28

Kevin Brown: King Zedekiah from Je 34:4-5 and JE 52:10-11 ? I'm surprised this is even in the list. The prophecy was that he would not die by the sword but would die in peace. O.K. dying in prison after one's sons eyes have been put out is not my idea of peaceful either, but let's face it, the God of the Bible makes his own rules and has his own idea of peace... The fact is Zed did not die by the sword. Paul Robson: and didn't die in peace either ? Have you really thought this through ? Christians will often comment about the peace of mind one gets through believing etc. If you go to Heaven then presumably God's peace consists of being locked away and having your eyes put out. Which doesn't sound very nice. This is a global cop out solution ; you redefine peace by effectively allowing God to make his own definition of peace ; you can't lose with anything here.

flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Tim Taylor - 2009/09/09 16:28

PATRICK Kevin, I will leave you hanging with the answer to the problem of evil . I am sure someone else will come along and give you a good defense (I could also). However, my main point is different. I have just used the above to lead to this main point, like I would in any good oral culture. The heart of my message is this: You will easily find contradictions, hard things to swallow, not least things you do not like in EVERY form of faith that you hold on to. What do I mean by this? No matter what you take to believe of this world, you will necessarily base it on some kind of faith! You will not be able to prove any world view, since we are too limited to do so. Say, you put your faith (=trust in) atheism. Well, then you must accept that everything, including life, is meaningless, since only a Who can give it meaning. Tim Once again, we have this tired assertion that the type of faith required to believe that a man rose from the dead 2000 years ago despite a myriad of contradictions is the same as the faith required to believe that your car will start, the sun will rise, your medication will work, etc. This is a blatant attempt to equate the absurd with the reliable, legend with science. Claiming that atheism requires faith is like claiming a bald man has hair. It takes no faith to conclude that you have offered no evidence that a dead man was resurrected 2000 years ago. That evidence being absent, a belief system that proceeds under an assumption that a man did not rise from the dead is certainly reasonable. Does your lack of belief in Santa Claus require faith?

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by flyingkight - 2009/09/09 16:28

PATRICK What about evolution. Well, survival of the fittest. If I can outsmart, outwit, outperform you and can beat you at anything, then evolution gives me the right to do so (by any means I can, ... cheating, killing are allowed, if I can live and get away with them). DARRYL Evolution doesn't give you the right to do anything. How many times must Christians be told that the theory of evolution is no more a system of morality than is the theory of gravity. Evolution also applies to groups, not individuals. Evolution merely seeks to explain the diversity of life on earth, nothing more, nothing less. Whatever morality you derive from it reflects only on the person drawing the moral conclusions. If you think evolution gives you the right to kill, cheat, etc..., then by all means, do not believe it, please. Darryl Sent via Deja.com <http://www.deja.com/> Before you buy.

flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Kevin Brown - 2009/09/09 16:28

Kevin Brown: King Zedekiah from Je 34:4-5 and JE 52:10-11 ? I'm surprised this is even in the list. The prophecy was that he would not die by the sword but would die in peace. O.K. dying in prison after one's sons eyes have been

put out is not my idea of peaceful either, but let's face it, the God of the Bible makes his own rules and has his own idea of peace... The fact is Zed did not die by the sword. Paul Robson: and didn't die in peace either? Have you really thought this through? Christians will often comment about the peace of mind one gets through believing etc. If you go to Heaven then presumably God's peace consists of being locked away and having your eyes put out. Which doesn't sound very nice. This is a global cop out solution; you redefine peace by effectively allowing God to make his own definition of peace; you can't lose with anything here. Paul, I know, it's a downer, isn't it? But refusing to believe Christianity is true because God can and does make His own rules and definitions of concepts would in my opinion be an overly emotional response. This is why I want to know if it is true or not. I'm already depressed because God appears to be somewhat of a tyrant in the Bible. Kevin

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Posted by Kevin Brown - 2009/09/09 16:28

I am a believer in Christianity who is seeking a way out because I am having great difficulty taking the doctrine of eternal damnation of the many (which is clearly taught in scripture). Since my religious experience is in line with what the Bible teaches, the only honest way I can see to do this is to 'prove' the bible is in error. GRAY: Major errors? How about when Jesus said God's kingdom will be established within the lifetime of some of those in his audience at the time? (In other words before about 80 C.E.) Apologists make up excuses for this, including giving the Greek word *genea* a false and incorrect meaning. But Jesus said exactly what I wrote above. Variants of it appear in about 10 places in the NT. Steve, As you say the Christians have an answer for this and it seems perfectly acceptable to them. Me, I don't know. If we could prove that the word meant 'only' and always meant the time when the NT people were alive that would be something. but then the preterists would say, well, he was talking about the kingdom of god coming when the holy spirit came...

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Michael Davis - 2009/09/09 16:28

MT 27:44 Both of those who are crucified with Jesus taunt him. LK 23:39-42 Only one taunts Jesus, and he is rebuked by the other for doing so. So they both taunt him, then one stops and defends Jesus. Am I nuts or is this a plausible reading of the text? DAVIS Again, a conflict between two sources. Such conflicts raise all types of questions. If there was a single source, i.e. god, did he have a memory problem? Did the evangelists make a mistake? Did some copyist make a mistake? Who knows. All we can say for certain is that one manuscript says one thing while another disagrees with it. Meaning that the scriptures are not inerrant. BROWN MT 27:48, LK 23:36, JN 19:29 Jesus was offered vinegar to drink. MK 15:23 It was wine and myrrh, and he did not drink it. JN 19:29-30 Whatever it was, he did drink it. So Jesus was offered wine and he did not drink it, then he was offered vinegar and he did drink it? Does each of the Gospel accounts have to give 'all' details? DAVIS Again, since the texts contradict one another, we have no way of telling exactly what he was offered or whether he took it. This particular item is considered by some to be a prophetic fulfillment and so must be accurately related. Apparently at least one of the evangelists didn't care about the prophetic fulfillment aspect. It's not that each gospel must give all the details, but that the details they give should not be contradictory. BROWN MT 27:54 The centurion says: Truly this was the son of God. MK 15:39 He says: Truly this man was the son of God! LK 23:47 He says: Truly this man was innocent (or righteous). LoL. DAVIS Again, this is an example of multiple sources not agreeing on the details of the story. Who was right? Were any of them right? How do we know? We don't. Does it matter? Probably not. BROWN MT 24:9 Even some of the disciples of Jesus will be killed. JN 8:51 If anyone keeps Jesus' words, he will never see death. HE 9:27 men die once, then judgment follows. Anyone who has been a christian will understand why this is silly. DAVIS Ah, you mean the old theological word dodge, where death doesn't really mean death, it means something else? One of the things you spend time on in seminary is learning the language of theology. It is common practice for theologians and clergy in any religion, not just christianity, to have an entire vocabulary of words with different meanings than the common usage. The way to pick out this dodge is to listen for or look for phrases like, what this really means is... , in the original language, this says ... , read in the context of the rest of scripture, we see that this says... , what god is saying here is... . My response to such a contradiction is, why didn't the author of the text actually say what they meant? BROWN MT 28:1 It was toward dawn when they arrived. MK 16:2 It was after sunrise. LK 24:1 It was at early dawn. JN 20:1 It was still dark. One has to stretch a bit to get that meaning into Mt 28:1. It could mean that, or it could mean they left 'when it was still dark'. DAVIS The old Easter Challenge! There is a currently published challenge offering a cash prize for anyone who can actually reconcile the four christian gospels' accounts of the events of easter without changing any words or deleting any verses. To my knowledge, after a number of years, it has yet to be claimed. The events, as written, are contradictory. Apparently even god himself couldn't get the gospel writers to agree on what happened at one of the pivotal events of christian history. BROWN What are the 'best' errors and/or contradictions you've seen in

the Bible? What are the 'best' websites and books for this sort of thing? DAVIS Try <http://www.infidels.org> for starters. Farrell Till, who posts here, has a mail list for discussing biblical inerrancy which might be helpful. Try reading a bit of Thomas Paine, John Patrick Michael Murphy, or Dan Barker. There are also some rabbis who are quite capable of taking christianity apart piece-by-piece. Try www.outreachjudaism.com, the rabbi there accepts email questions and has researched and posted answers on the site. As I said at the beginning, the issue for me was this: I was told by my spiritual leadership that the bible was the rule of faith and contained the basis for all doctrine and the essentials for gaining eternal life. When I went back and read what it actually said, it was so full of contradictions that it appeared to be ludicrous to claim it as an authority. I ended up with the following circular reasoning: How did I know the church doctrines were true? Because the bible told me so. How did I know the bible, with all of its contradictions was true? Because the church doctrine told me so. They were two schemas of belief, each requiring the support of unquestioning faith in the other. My own deconversion was a bit like the scene in the Wizard of Oz where Dorothy sees the wizard as he really is. By reading with my eyes open, I removed the curtain and allowed my perception of what I thought I was seeing to change radically. YHWH, my Oz, was really not who or what I had been told. The voice booming, Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain, I am the great and powerful Oz!, dwindled to its proper place as just another religious myth. And I was able to get on with the rest of my life. Sorry for the length of this post, but I encourage you to keep reading what the biblical text actually says and keep asking questions and digging for answers that make sense. That way lies freedom. Good luck.

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Steve Gray - 2009/09/09 16:28

Wilber: What about evolution. Well, survival of the fittest. If I can outsmart, outwit, outperform you and can beat you at anything, then evolution gives me the right to do so (by any means I can, ... cheating, killing are allowed, if I can live and get away with them). GRAY: That statement isn't even ridiculous. It's worse. Evolution as a force of nature gives no one any right to do anything. You must mean, if you mean anything, that belief in evolution makes people amoral. What is your evidence for this? Whenever I see this imbecilic claim by a Christian, I know that his/her confidence is weak and he or she must resort to far-fetched claims of amorality. Like it or not, humans have a moral system largely independent of their religion, if any, and it's that system which helps control our impulses.

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Charles Wyndham - 2009/09/09 16:28

Try the website <http://www.users.bigpond.com/Wyndkelm/>. You may well disagree with a lot of it, but the site is intended to help true Christians, not confuse them.

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by kornform - 2009/09/09 16:28

In a message dated 8/24/00 1:38:22 AM, mdav...@cox.rr.com writes: << BROWN MT 27:28 Jesus is given a scarlet robe (a sign of infamy). MK 15:17, JN 19:2 A purple robe (a sign of royalty). This really is nitpicking, isn't it? DAVIS Not for inerrantists. They're two different words in greek and two different colors signifying two different things. This is an example of differing eyewitness accounts which cast doubt on the accuracy of eyewitness accounts and the efficacy of oral tradition. KORNFORM A third explanation is that it shows the different words used by fiction writers, having nothing whatever to do with eyewitness accounts or oral tradition.

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by kornform - 2009/09/09 16:28

In a message dated 8/24/00 1:38:22 AM, mdav...@cox.rr.com writes: << BROWN MT 27:54 The centurion says: Truly this was the son of God. MK 15:39 He says: Truly this man was the son of God! LK 23:47 He says: Truly this man was innocent (or righteous). LoL. DAVIS Again, this is an example of multiple sources not agreeing on the details of the story. Who was right? Were any of them right? How do we know? We don't. Does it matter? Probably not.

KORNFORN Jesus expired and there was an earthquake. So what? Why would this lead to the conclusion that he was a son of god? Why not god

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by kornform - 2009/09/09 16:28

In a message dated 8/24/00 1:38:22 AM, mdav...@cox.rr.com writes: << BROWN What are the 'best' errors and/or contradictions you've seen in the Bible? What are the 'best' websites and books for this sort of thing? DAVIS Try <http://www.infidels.org> for starters. Farrell Till, who posts here, has a mail list for discussing biblical inerrancy which might be helpful. Try reading a bit of Thomas Paine, John Patrick Michael Murphy, or Dan Barker. There are also some rabbis who are quite capable of taking christianity apart piece-by-piece. Try www.outreachjudaism.com, the rabbi there accepts email questions and has researched and posted answers on the site. KORNFORN Look for Dennis McKinsey's books (Prometheus) or his massive material on Biblical Errancy on the Internet Infidels web pages <A HREF= <http://www.infidels.org/> The Secular Web</A

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Posted by kornform - 2009/09/09 16:28

In a message dated 8/24/00 1:38:22 AM, mdav...@cox.rr.com writes: << BROWN I am a believer in Christianity who is seeking a way out because I am having great difficulty taking the doctrine of eternal damnation of the many (which is clearly taught in scripture). Since my religious experience is in line with what the Bible teaches, the only honest way I can see to do this is to 'prove' the bible is in error. KORNFORN The central doctrine in Christianity is Jesus' alleged resurrection from the dead. If this did not happen according to Paul then the entire religion collapses. Of course it did not happen. It is described in anonymous tracts which represent copies of copies of copies, the first complete collections of the fable dating to 200 years or more after the alleged events. This is evidence? Moreover, no one resurrects from the dead today; why should anyone back then? The religious evidence does not support the claim at all and should not be believed even for a second.

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by kornform - 2009/09/09 16:28

In a message dated 8/24/00 1:38:39 AM, Wyndk...@bigpond.com writes: << Try the website <http://www.users.bigpond.com/Wyndkerm/>. You may well disagree with a lot of it, but the site is intended to help true Christians, not confuse them. KORNFORN Why do true Christians need help? Obviously the religion is so absurd everyone who adheres to it needs help.

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Posted by kornform - 2009/09/09 16:28

In a message dated 8/24/00 1:39:12 AM, kbr...@his.com writes: << Paul, I know, it's a downer, isn't it? But refusing to believe Christianity is true because God can and does make His own rules and definitions of concepts would in my opinion be an overly emotional response. This is why I want to know if it is true or not. I'm already depressed because God appears to be somewhat of a tyrant in the Bible. Kevin KORNFORN Somewhat of a tyrant?? Deuteronomy Chapter 7 1 ...many nations

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Rev. Bob - 2009/09/09 16:28

What are the 'best' errors and/or contradictions you've seen in the Bible? What are the 'best' websites and books for

this sort of thing? BTW, if you bring up minor things, like wrong dates for deaths of kings, etc, Christians will just say, well that's a copyist error or it's due to the different way the Jews kept time, and is unimportant because it does not affect doctrine. Bob: One of my favorite contradictions is the death of Judas, simply because the events are so clearly irreconcilable. Consider the accounts in skeletal form: (Matthew) Judas feels remorse, tries to return money, flings it into temple, hangs himself, field bought and named the Field of Blood because it was bought with blood money. (Acts) Judas buys a field (apparently remorse-free), falls badly enough that his guts fall out, field appropriated and named the Bloody Acre. In one, the field is bought after Judas dies, but in the other, he buys it himself...and both versions of the purchase claim that the thirty pieces of silver were the payment. Do contradictions GET any clearer? As far as doctrine and damnation go, I leave you with this puzzler: where is Judas spending eternity, and why? Think carefully; this is a trick question.

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Farrell Till - 2009/09/09 16:28

BROWN 1SA 21:1-6 Ahimalech was high priest when David ate the bread. MK 2:26 Abiathar was high priest at the time. The Christian anti anti Bible websites say that this is not a problem since Abiathar was Ahimalech's son. Don't know much about it, but it seems plausible, I guess. TILL I have sent to your personal address a posting entitled What Men with David? In it you will find the Abiathar issue discussed along with the problem of Mark's (Jesus's) claim that David had men with him at the time of the incident with Ahimelech. I have presented this to several inerrantists, and they run from it. Only a couple have made attempts to reply, but their quibbles were so easy to refute that they soon joined the others in running. Farrell Till Skepticism, Inc. jft...@midwest.net

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Steve Gray - 2009/09/09 16:28

Claiming that atheism requires faith is like claiming a bald man has hair. GRAY: I think the usual saying is Atheism is a religion like bald is a hair color. Not that it's a choice, but I'd rather be bald than religious.

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flight to egypt Questions from a Bible believer

Posted by Raoul - 2009/09/09 16:28

Paul, I know, it's a downer, isn't it? But refusing to believe Christianity is true because God can and does make His own rules and definitions of concepts would in my opinion be an overly emotional response. This is why I want to know if it is true or not. I'm already depressed because God appears to be somewhat of a tyrant in the Bible. Hi Kevin, and welcome to the club. If you want to forget about the tyrant side of God, join a pentecostal church where people shout with a common voice that God is good, all the time, all the time, God is good. Pretend you believe this, and eventually, you'll believe it. I went there, but I am out of it. I, too, once started seeing the God of the Bible as a tyrant. Since then, it became more and more difficult to read the OT trying to find an all loving God. When I realized it could not be found there, I finally abandoned Christianity. If you want to find a religion without God, try Buddhism. It shares similar moral values, but is free from a tyrant God. And as Michelet (I believe) said, this is one religion that at least did not have an inquisition. Buddhism seems to be getting more and more popular in western civilizations, although our individualistic behavior (thanks to the concept of 'personal savior'?) make it difficult to expand. Anyway, this is getting way out of the newsgroup topic. Raoul

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Posted by David Yeung - 2009/09/09 16:28

KEVIN BROWN I am a believer in Christianity who is seeking a way out because I am having great difficulty taking the doctrine of eternal damnation of the many (which is clearly taught in scripture). DAVID YEUNG Hi Kevin, I think that you're going about this the wrong way. You've found some unpleasant things in the Bible. But just because it's unpleasant, doesn't necessarily mean that it's untrue. After all, it might be true that God is a ruthless tyrant who inflicts

cruel punishments on people for eternity and so on. And if it is true, however unpleasant it may be, it would be futile to try to seek a way out. What I'm saying is that you shouldn't be subjecting the Bible to an examination just so you can seek a way out; rather, I think you should try to find out how those ideas came to be formulated and so on. That is, rather than seek to demonstrate one particular point of view or another, you should simply study the Bible to find out what is true.

KEVIN BROWN Since my religious experience is in line with what the Bible teaches, the only honest way I can see to do this is to 'prove' the Bible is in error.

DAVID YEUNG I don't agree with this line of reasoning, since the truth may very well be unpleasant. However, you've also too easily convinced yourself that the Bible is somehow true. In what way is your religious experience in line with what the Bible teaches? And how does this show that the Bible may be true in any way? If you experience things which confirm the Bible, there are still several possibilities: 1) It's actually true (which is what you seem to be afraid of). 2) You are mistaken about the nature of your experience, but in a similar manner to the mistaken impressions of the writers of the Bible, and so it appears that your experience conforms with theirs. 3) You're simply experiencing what you were taught to/expect to experience. This is plausible in light of the fact that people of other religions have experiences that are in line with their beliefs. 4) You are being tested. (This is what I sometimes hear from Christians who try to explain why people of other religions have experiences that conform to their religions. It's only fair that I can turn this around.) For example, suppose that there is a God, but She wants to test people to see who would be the most compassionate. So She invents the Bible with its atrocious description of God, to test whether people would be governed by their fear of punishment, or stand up to the injustice, etc. I don't think that there is a way for you to differentiate between the above scenarios based purely on your experience. So while your experience may be in line with the Bible, the Bible may nevertheless be erroneous.

KEVIN BROWN So I have been looking at some web stuff relating to the errancy of the Bible... And I have not found anything that can be called a major error or contradiction. Let me give a couple of examples of alleged errors and contradictions which are only useful for one who presupposes the Bible is in error.

DAVID YEUNG Again, I would approach this from a different angle. Most people when speaking about Biblical errancy refer to the Bible's putative errors (or putative lack thereof). However, is this really treating it in a fair manner, i.e. are you treating the Bible as you would an analogous text from another culture in history? There is nothing that can be called a major error or contradiction in, say, the official Chinese court histories, either. (Any apparent contradictions can be explained away with a lot less creativity than for the case of the Bible.) But does this imply that 1) the Chinese court historians were divinely guided in everything they recorded, or 2) if subsequent writers disagree with prior writers, they altered or added to the previous account in such a way as to change the meaning? And how could you tell the difference? Modern scholars have developed a set of tools or techniques referred to as textual criticism. There are ways to tell if a text is composite, was subsequently altered, and so on, based on changes in language, style, etc. When looking at a text, you have to examine the author's intention, his audience, the message he's trying to convey, etc. When seen in this manner, even what might otherwise be dismissed as minor issues could be quite important. For example, consider the cursing of the fig tree in Matt 21:18-22 and in Mark 11:12-14, 20-25. In Matthew, the fig tree dried up immediately when cursed. In Mark, however, Jesus first cursed the fig tree, but the story is interrupted by Jesus' visit to the temple. It's only the next morning that they saw that the fig tree had withered. In both cases, Jesus cursed the tree when coming back from Bethany, and afterwards Jesus gave a similar teaching on the power of prayer. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that these are variants on the same original story. But how did it get into the two different forms? It's possible that both authors derived it from the same source, but each edited it to suit his own teaching purposes. Mark may have copied from Matthew (perhaps unlikely, as scholars think Mark was written first) and inserted a second story to add suspense. Or Matthew may have put the two parts of the story together for continuity. Also, the speech by Jesus at the end of the story is obviously the same teaching, but their wording is different. In any case, the authors did not feel compelled to record things as they were, but edited their material to suit their teaching purposes. (Interestingly, Luke 13:6-9 also has a story about an unfruitful fig tree, but in this case it was a parable told by Jesus. Perhaps the parable was turned into an actual event through oral retelling?) If you bear in mind that the records of the histories of the Bible may have had political motivations (rather than just pedagogical ones), then even the minor differences between the events recorded in, for example, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles should lead you to doubt the veracity of the Bible. The account in 2 Sam 21, for example, has Elhanan slaying Goliath. But according to 1 Chron 20, Elhanan killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath. The two accounts seem to have been originally identical, since the verses before and after them record the same events. So why would Chronicles record something different? One possibility is that historically, it was Elhanan who slew Goliath. However, people have a tendency to attribute heroic deeds to their heroes or kings. The killing of Goliath may have been attributed to David instead through folklore, because his character had developed into a sort of legend (most of the Psalms were also attributed to David). In any case, the story of 1 Sam 17 was composed, which contradicted with 2 Sam 21. The 1 Chron 20 account would have been a way to clean up or resolve the contradiction. I am well aware that there are several Christian explanations for this discrepancy, but again, how can you tell the difference between a text that was originally inerrant and one that had errors but was subsequently cleaned up? There were certainly political reasons to turn David into a great king; or it might have simply been the sentiments of the people. (If you read the history of other cultures, there does appear to be a tendency to transfer the deeds committed by an army or people, to the general or king himself.) When you look at the Bible from the framework of a text composed in the context of its time and culture, the errors will become apparent for what they are: signals that the text was edited (for whatever purpose). Textual criticism has much better explanations for the errors in the Bible than inerrantists can come up with, or at least that's what I've seen.

KEVIN BROWN King Zedekiah from Je 34:4-5 and JE 52:10-11? I'm surprised this is even in the list. The prophecy was that he would not die by the sword but would die in peace. O.K. dying in prison after one's sons eyes have been put out is not my idea of peaceful either, but let's face it, the God of the Bible makes his own rules and has his own idea of peace... The fact is

Zed did not die by the sword. DAVID YEUNG Jeremiah 34 (NIV) 4 `Yet hear the promise of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah. This is what the LORD says concerning you: You will not die by the sword; 5 you will die peacefully. As people made a funeral fire in honor of your fathers, the former kings who preceded you, so they will make a fire in your honor and lament, Alas, O master! I myself make this promise, declares the LORD.' Jeremiah 52 10 There at Riblah the king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; he also killed all the officials of Judah. 11 Then he put out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon, where he put him in prison till the day of his death. But he also didn't die in peace. How far are you willing to go before you accept that a prophecy was not fulfilled? For example, Herodotus in The Histories, Book I, Chapter 91, records the story of King Croesus. King Croesus was contemplating war with Persia, so he went to the Oracle at Delphi and asked what the outcome would be. The response was, If Croesus went to war with Cyrus, he would destroy a mighty kingdom. So, Croesus went to war - and lost miserably. The Oracle explained that the prophecy had been fulfilled. Croesus had indeed destroyed a might kingdom: his own. Would you consider this an example of a fulfilled prophecy, or a hedged bet, since it's vague enough to have been fulfilled under a diverse set of conditions? The question is, how far are you willing to allow a prophecy to be interpreted? A prediction that someone wouldn't die by the sword isn't all that amazing, as there are plenty of ways to die but not by the sword. To ... read more »

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Posted by Brad - 2009/09/09 16:28

MT 27:44 Both of those who are crucified with Jesus taunt him. LK 23:39-42 Only one taunts Jesus, and he is rebuked by the other for doing so. So they both taunt him, then one stops and defends Jesus. Am I nuts or is this a plausible reading of the text? B: I think the problem goes deeper than a simple explanation that one thief changes his mind and defends Jesus. The problem is that Luke was trying to do what the NT writers loved to do and that was to manufacture a prophecy fulfillment. The author of Matthew did this when he concocts a flight to Egypt so that prophecy can be fulfilled (Hosea 11:1). But the so-called OT prophecy isn't about Jesus nor is it even a prophecy in the first place. Nor is a flight to Egypt or infant death decree found in any other NT story. I believe Luke was trying to do the same thing with the thief on the cross. He was trying to fulfill Isa 53:12. Isa 53:12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. The transgressors were the thieves and Jesus made intercession for one of them. I would not be surprised if the thieves were crucified with Jesus in an attempt to tie Jesus to Isa 53:12 in Matt but Luke carried the fulfillment one step further by showing Jesus making intercession as well. - Hide quoted text -- Show quoted text -

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Posted by David Yeung - 2009/09/09 16:28

RAOUL If you want to find a religion without God, try Buddhism. It shares similar moral values, but is free from a tyrant God. And as Michelet (I believe) said, this is one religion that at least did not have an inquisition. DAVID YEUNG As a practising Buddhist, I feel obligated to point out misconceptions about Buddhism, even good ones. Buddhists and Buddhist nations have certainly gone to war and persecuted others during history; this is true of any sufficiently large group of people. (See, for example, Brian Victoria's Zen at War.)

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