

Introduction:

1. One of the arguments that opponents of the Bible like to make is that it is not even reliable.
 - a. They will claim that it is full of contradictions.
 - b. They will claim that we can have no idea what the text actually said since it has gone through 2,000 years of copying, and the originals are no longer in existence.
 - c. Some even go so far as to claim the Catholic Church edited the Bible to its present form and that they added or took away from what was originally written.
 - d. Many claim it was simply written by men and contains people and places that never existed.
2. For the ones who have not studied these topics or are not strong in the faith, some of these arguments may sound valid and cause some to lose their faith.
 - a. This is a perfect reason for us to look into the reliability of the Bible.
 - b. This information will also help us to keep others from being taken in by the lies perpetrated about God's word!
3. Is the Bible reliable?
 - I. The Bible claims to be inspired by God.
 - A. Throughout the OT, there are many times where "thus saith the Lord" or "the word of the Lord came unto [a certain prophet] saying..."
 1. The phrase "thus saith the Lord" appears in the OT 430 times.
 2. The Phrase "the word of the Lord came..." appears well over 100 times in the OT.
 - B. The NT writers claimed to speak by inspiration of God.
 1. I Timothy 3:16 – all Scripture is given by inspiration of God...
 2. Ephesians 3:3-5 – Paul revealed the message from God.
 3. Revelation 1:1 – John claimed the revelation was from God.
 4. Acts 2:33 – Peter claimed to be speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit (from God).
 - C. If the Bible is what it claims to be, there were no contradictions or errors in it when it was written.
 1. An infallible God would not produce a book which contained errors or contradictions.
 2. To do so would be calling God fallible.
 - II. Are there contradictions in the Bible?
 - A. The short answer to this is NO!
 1. If we believe in God as He is revealed to us in the Bible, we cannot allow for the possibilities of errors in His word.
 2. When the Scriptures were first written, there were no errors or contradictions AT ALL!
 - B. Many books have been written which claim to list contradiction after contradiction in the Bible.
 1. These supposed contradictions range from things such as genealogical gaps to name spellings.
 2. We should all realize that it is very easy to claim something is a contradiction, whether it actually is or not.
 - C. Many books have been written to deal with these supposed contradictions in the Bible.
 1. Though it is easy for someone to claim a contradiction, it is not always as quick and easy to answer the contradictions.
 2. There have been entire books that deal with answering one supposed contradiction in the Bible.

- D. Some rules for dealing with supposed contradictions (JW McGarvey—Evidences of Christianity, vol 2):
1. Two statements are contradictory, not when they differ, but when they cannot BOTH be true.
 - a. Jesus told Peter that Peter would deny Him three times before the cock crowed (Matthew 26:34).
 - b. Jesus told Peter that he would deny Christ three times before the cock crowed twice (Mark 14:30).
 - c. Both of these statements can be true at the same time, because Jesus never said “before the cock crows ONCE.”
 - d. Another example would be if someone asked “do you have a son?” and you answer “yes.” Another might ask you, “how many sons do you have?” and you answer “two.” These are not contradictory statements.
 2. If there is any rational hypothesis by which the statements might be both considered true, we cannot pronounce them to be contradictory.
 3. Just because one writer did not see fit to include a detail that another writer included does not mean they are contradictory.
 - a. This only shows that one writer gave a fuller account, or supplemented the other.
 - b. Look at any four biographies of any famous person. They will not have the same information in each one, for some will deal with aspects the others did not, or with more or less detail than the others. Yet, we do not accuse them of being contradictory!
 4. When there is an appearance of contradiction between two writers, common justice requires that we should exhaust our ingenuity in searching for some probable supposition upon which they may both be true.
 - a. The better the reputation of the writers, the more pressing this obligation is.
 - b. Sometimes finding the answers to alleged contradictions is not as easy as we would like.
 5. It is not necessary to prove that our answer to the supposed contradiction is the absolute truth, but only to show that it is a truly plausible answer (John W. Haley).
 - a. Once a plausible answer is given, it becomes the accuser’s responsibility to show that the answer is not possible, otherwise the accusation of a contradiction is answered.
 - b. Many times, there are many possible answers to supposed contradictions.
 6. Many times, the answer to a supposed contradiction can not be seen easily in English, but is abundantly clear in the original language (Eric Lyons).
 - a. Jesus told His disciples to “provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves...” (Matthew 10:9-10).
 - b. Jesus told His disciples not to take anything for their journey except “a staff only...be shod with sandals, and not put on two coats.” (Mark 6:8-9).
 - c. Are they supposed to take a staff or not? Are they supposed to take shoes/sandals or not?
 - d. In English this is confusing, but in the Greek, the words are different.
 - i. Jesus, in Matthew, is saying “no not go get these things in preparation for your journey to preach, just go.”

- ii. In Mark, Jesus is telling them to “take what you have with you; do not go get anything else.”
 - iii. The word in Matthew means to “procure, or purchase,” the word in Mark means “to bring along.”
 - e. When we understand the Greek, the contradiction disappears.
 - E. Every supposed contradiction in the Bible has an answer if we are willing to search, study, and find it.
 - III. Are there errors in the Bible?
 - A. Critics of the Bible are quick to point out that there are over 300,000 (some say 400,000) variants (differences) in the various Greek manuscripts that we have.
 - 1. Considering there are not even that many words in the NT (138,162 according to one Greek NT text), this number can be quite shocking initially.
 - 2. However, what the critics don’t bother to mention is that between 70-80% of these differences are in spelling, mostly of names.
 - a. In Greek, sometimes John is spelled with one ‘n’ and sometimes with two.
 - b. This would account for approximately 230,000 of the errors.
 - c. If you were copying the NT by hand, do you think you’d possibly misspell some words?
 - d. These differences make no difference to the meaning of the text.
 - 3. Also, critics like to ignore that some of the “errors” are simply someone writing two words in the wrong order, repeating a word, accidental re-writing of a line, and other common mistakes which we still make today.
 - a. How many times is the Lord called “Jesus Christ?”
 - b. How many times is the Lord called “Christ Jesus?”
 - c. Sometimes they transposed words, just as we do.
 - 4. Many of the manuscripts we have were written in church lectionaries (record books in which they might—among other things--write the Bible reading for a specific Sunday).
 - a. This is important because they might begin their reading in the middle of a longer section of Scripture.
 - b. So, at the beginning of their reading for the week, where the original might have said “he” (referring to Christ or Peter or someone else), they would have placed the speakers name in place of the first “he.”
 - c. This is a frequent occurrence, where some manuscripts say “He” and others say “Jesus.”
 - d. These differences make no difference to the meaning of the text.
 - 5. In Greek, the order of words is not as important as in English.
 - a. One could say “the dog bit the boy” or “the boy bit the dog” and in English, these are totally different sentences.
 - b. In Greek, however, the words which they wished to emphasize came first, and the spelling of the word dictates what is the subject, verb, and direct object.
 - c. There are many “errors” where the sentence was written in a slightly different order, but the meaning is 100% the same.
 - d. These differences make no difference to the meaning of the text.
 - B. Most textual scholars declare that only 1% of the differences make any difference to the text itself.
 - 1. This means that only 1% of the differences would change what the sentences say.

2. While this might still seem large (since that is still about 3,000 differences), NOT ONE of these instances contradicts clear Bible teaching in other places where there are no variants.
 - a. I John 1:4 – “...so that *your* joy may be full” (KJV) or “so that *our* joy may be full” (NASB). Regardless of which of these it is, spreading the truth of the gospel brings joy (both to the hearers and to the ones spreading it).
 - b. Romans 5:1 – “we have peace with God” (KJV) or “let us have peace with God” (ASV). Regardless of which of these it is, Paul is letting them know that peace only comes through God.
 3. Note, then, that while these differences might change how the sentence reads, ultimately the meaning of the sentence and the book are unaffected.
- C. In the OT, there are some scribal errors which are evident, but when studied the true reading is rather clear.
1. One Hebrew manuscript says Solomon began to reign when he was 1 year old!
 2. Sometimes a scribe might accidentally smudge what he wrote and a letter became confused with another similar letter.
 3. Most of these errors can be seen in the recording of people’s ages (they used letters for numbers, like the Romans did, and sometimes a number was left out or transposed).
- IV. Did the Catholic Church choose and edit the Bible books?
- A. At the council of Nicaea in 325, a group of believers got together and they discussed (among other things) which books belonged in the Bible.
1. It is important to realize that they did not go through and take a random vote of hundreds of different writings.
 2. This was simply a declaration by these men of acceptance of the books which were already almost universally accepted in the church.
 3. There are lists of NT Biblical books which pre-dates this council by over 100 years.
- B. The early Christian writers were uniform in their acceptance and quoting of the actual inspired NT books.
1. Even in the second century, the letters of Paul, Peter, John, and the gospel records were commonly quoted as authoritative.
 2. The 27 books we have today were the ones accepted by the Christians as authoritative, inspired works from God easily 200 years before the supposed “choosing of the Bible.”
- C. Are there other books which should have been in the Bible which were rejected?
1. There are many books which claim to be written by apostles and prophets of the NT, but they all fail the test when examined.
 - a. None of them were written during the time of the apostles (most coming well over 100 years after the death of most of them).
 - b. Most of these other “gospels” attempt to promote ideas which did not arise until the second century.
 - c. Some of them are downright laughable (one has Jesus telling the apostles that He will turn Mary Magdalene into a man so that she can go to heaven).
 2. If we are to recognize the power and providence of God, we need to admit that He would not allow His people to be without these books if indeed they were messages to us from Him.
- V. Are the people and places in the Bible somewhat fiction?
- A. This was a common teaching of many unbelievers in the 1800’s.

1. They would claim that King David did not exist, because there was no historical evidence (outside of the Bible and other religious literature of the Jews) that he did.
 2. They said that since there was not any archaeological evidence of the Hittites ever existing, Moses (if it was he who wrote it) made them up for his stories.
 3. They said Pilate was a made-up character.
- B. Every time someone opposes the Bible and says it is not historically accurate, they are proven wrong.
1. Thousands of writings have been discovered from the Hittite Empire, as well as their capital and palace.
 2. Records have been found from other nations which refer to the king of Judah as the "son of David." If he is a descendant of David, then David must have existed.
 3. In excavations, inscriptions have been found which date to the time of Pilate and mention him by name and office.
- C. Since the Bible has been proven correct and accurate time after time, why do people insist on continuing to fight against it?
1. One famous archaeologist, Sir William Ramsay, set out to prove that the Bible was false by tracing the footsteps of Paul in the book of Acts.
 - a. Instead of disproving Luke, Mr. Ramsay became convinced that Luke was a "historian of the first degree."
 - b. Mr. Ramsay then wrote many books about different Biblical cities and showed how they match up perfectly with the Biblical record.
 2. Two others did a similar thing, and both came to the same conclusion: the Bible is as accurate as it gets in regards to recording history and geography and politics in the first century (and before).
- D. When there are things which the Bible says and we do not yet have archaeological proof for it, it is best to take the Bible's word for it, for it has never been proven false before.
1. Just because there is an absence of evidence, it does not mean that it is evidence of absence.
 2. The Bible can be trusted!

Conclusion:

1. There is more evidence for the text of the Bible than any Greek writing of antiquity (almost 10 times as many manuscripts as the second Greek book – Homer's Odyssey).
2. There are fewer discrepancies in the Greek manuscripts of the Bible (though there are 10 times as many manuscripts) than there are in the Odyssey.
3. Some of our Greek manuscripts date back to the end of the first century and the beginning of the second, just 50 years after the NT was completed (as compared to at least 500 years before the earliest copy of Homer's book).
4. The Bible we have today is reliable, trustworthy, and inspired by God!
5. Let us read it with all confidence!
6. If you ever come across a difficulty in the Bible, remember that God is the writer, the Bible is infallible. Those who argue against it are always wrong!