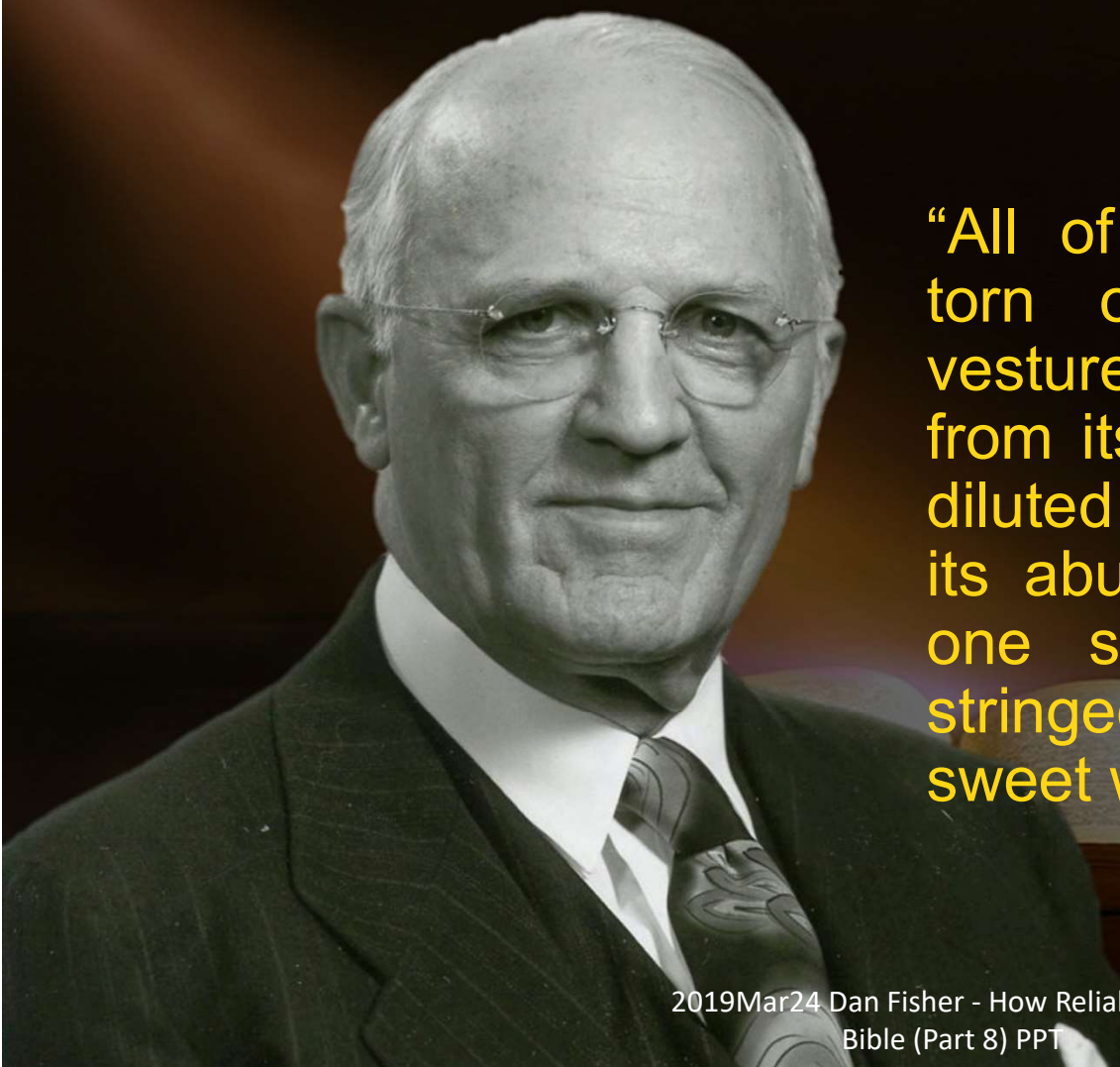


How reliable is the Bible?

Part 8: “So-called biblical contradictions”



A black and white portrait of Dr. Robert G. Lee, an older man with glasses, wearing a suit and tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

“All of its enemies have not torn one hole in its holy vesture, or stolen one flower from its wonderful garden, nor diluted one drop of honey from its abundant hive, nor broken one string of its thousand-stringed harp, nor drowned one sweet word in infidel ink.”

Dr. Robert G. Lee

“A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put.”

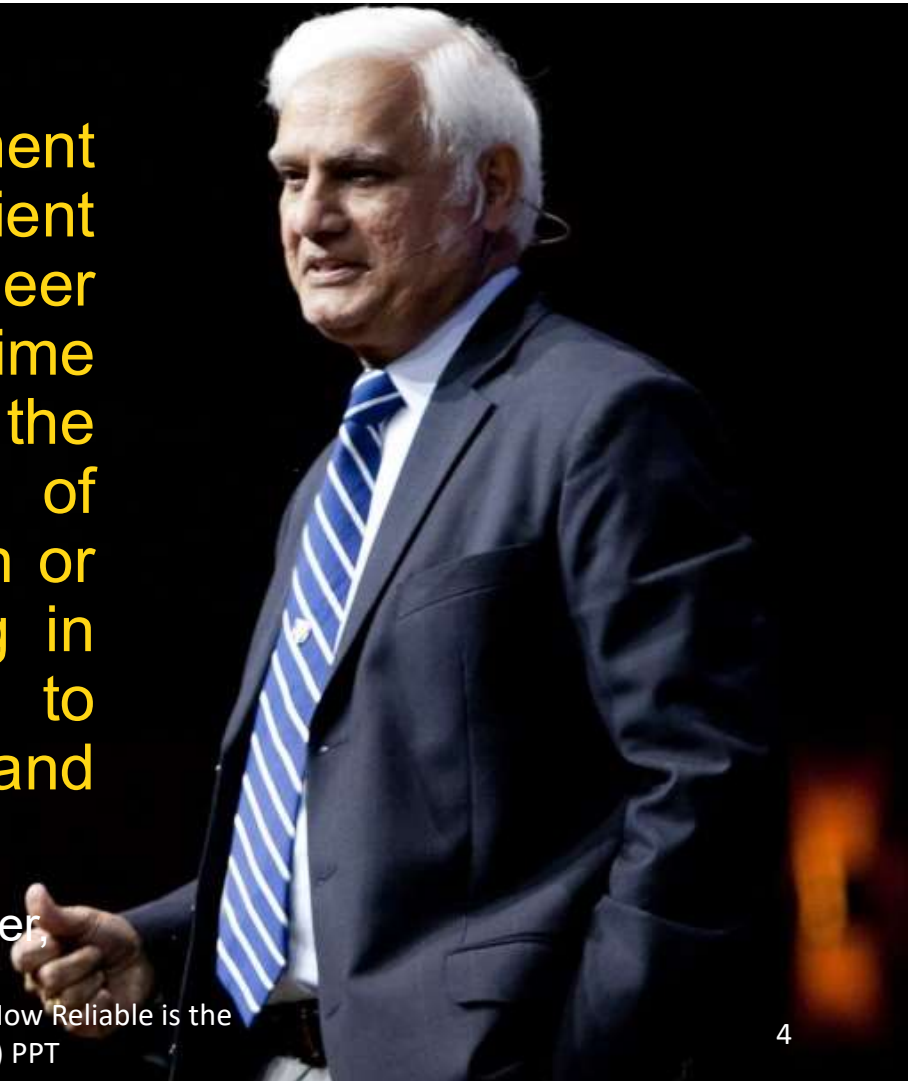


Bernard Ramm
Theologian & apologist

“In real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the documents, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it. There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity.”

Ravi Zacharias, theologian, philosopher,
apologist

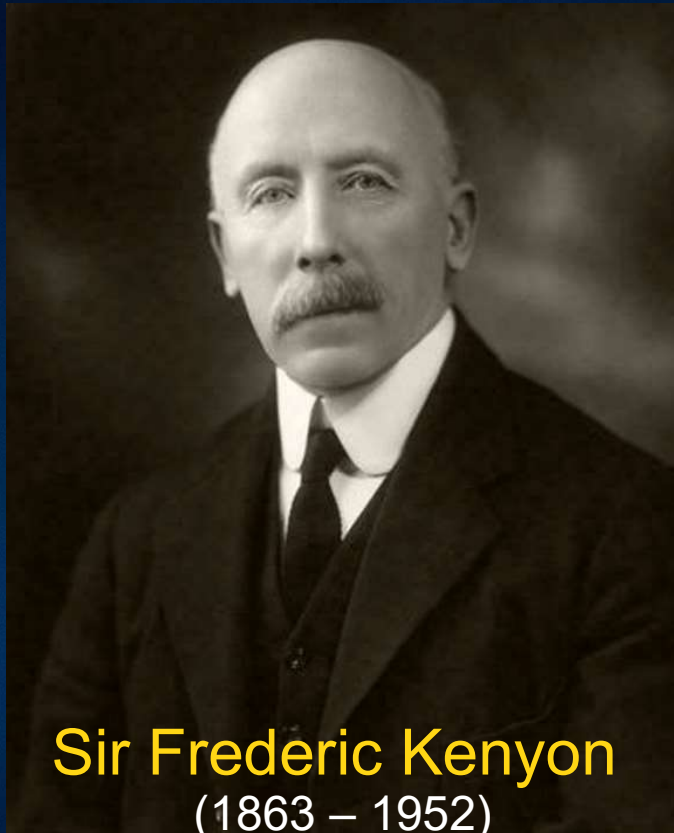
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Bible (Part 8) PPT



- There are 24,970 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today.
- The closest other work is Homer's *Iliad* with 643 copies.
- Caesar's *Gallic Wars* are reconstructed with 9 - 10 manuscripts
- Titus Livy's *History of Rome* is reconstructed with 20 manuscripts
- The writings of Tacitus are reconstructed with only 2 manuscripts

- Manuscripts used to confirm the N.T. date from a few decades to 200 yrs from the originals.
- The manuscript closest to Caesar's *Gallic Wars* dates to 900 years from the original.
- The manuscripts used to reconstruct Tacitus' writings are 800 & 1000 years from the original.
- Sophocles' plays – 1400 years after the original

- The books of the Bible were written during the second half of the 1st century.
- The books started being copied around 95 A.D.
- Copies of the copies were written from about 150 A.D. – 325 A.D.
- From 325 A.D. – 1500 A.D. hand written books started being made of the Scriptures as they were refined and corrected.
- 1500 – the present, printed copies started being made as older and older manuscripts have been found refining the Scriptures even further.



Sir Frederic Kenyon
(1863 – 1952)

British paleographer
biblical/classical scholar

“The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.”

Yet, biblical criticism is alive and well today.

What is “biblical criticism”?

Criticism: the exercise of judgment

There are two types of critical approaches to the Bible: lower & higher criticism

Lower Criticism: is concerned with the authenticity of the biblical text & attempts to restore the readings of the original text – the autograph.

Higher Criticism: is concerned with the genuineness of the biblical text & challenges the date of the text, its literary style & structure, its literary form, its historicity, its sources, and its authorship & is generally an attack against the trustworthiness of Scripture.

The problems with modern criticism of the Bible:

- It is based on an unjustified, anti-supernatural bias which it superimposes on the biblical documents.
 - Moses didn't write the Pentateuch
 - Daniel wasn't written until 165 B.C.
 - Isaiah did not write the whole book of Isaiah – named Cyrus 100 yrs in advance

- It either neglects or minimizes the role of the apostles and eyewitnesses who recorded the events. (Matthew, Mark, & John were actual eyewitnesses)
- It assumes wrongly that the N.T. writers did not distinguish between their own words and those of Jesus. (a red letter edition is easily constructed)
- It incorrectly assumes that the N.T. stories are like folklore and myth.

2 Pet 1:16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

- It undermines the integrity of the N.T. writers by claiming that Jesus never really said (or did) what they claim He said (or did). (Gospel writers creators or recorders)
- It is based on the implausible premise that the early church had no real biographical interest.

(If the disciples really believed who Jesus was, they would have been interested in recording Jesus' biography – Jn 21:25, 1 Jn 1:1-2, Lk 1:1-4)

- It neglects the role of the Holy Spirit in activating memories of the eyewitnesses. Jn 14:26

Being able to defend Scripture against criticism is critical because correct doctrine is paramount to Christianity.

2 Tim 3:6-9 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; ⁹but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

Acts 20:29-31 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

1 Tim 6:20-21 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge — ²¹ by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.

Eph 4:14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of **doctrine**, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

1 Tim 4:6,13,16 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good **doctrine** which you have carefully followed. ... ¹³ Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to **doctrine**. ... ¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the **doctrine**. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Titus 1:9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound **doctrine**, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Titus 2:1,7,10 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound **doctrine**: ... ⁷ in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in **doctrine** showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, ... ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the **doctrine** of God our Savior in all things.

2 Tim 4:3-5 For the time will come when they will not endure sound **doctrine**, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

So, what about the so-called contradictions in the Bible?

1. God cannot be the source of confusion

1 Cor 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

2. God cannot be the source of contradiction

Heb 6:18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

3. People who allege that the Bible contains contradictions generally fall into two categories

- Those who believe this to be the case because they are sincerely mistaken having heard it repeated enough that they believe a lie.
- Those who hate the Bible and seek to pervert or destroy it at all costs using whatever means possible.

Great attempts have been made to absolve the Greek and Latin classics of contradictions under the presumption that the authors did not contradict themselves. The principle of “innocent until proven guilty” should apply to the Bible as much as to any other book.

4. What is a contradiction?

“A mere difference does a contradiction not make.”

The Law of Non-Contradiction – it impossible for the same thing at the same time both to be and not to be for the same person and in the same respect; nothing can have at the same time and at the same place contradictory and inconsistent qualities.

The Law of non-contradiction states that something cannot be both true and not true at the same time when dealing with the same context.

5. Questions to ask when a contradiction is suspected:

- Is the same person or thing under consideration?
- Is the same time period in view?
- Is the language that seems to be self contradictory employed in the same sense?

6. A door may be open or shut, but the same door cannot be both open and shut at the same time.

Robert is rich. Robert is poor.

- No contradiction exists between verses that refer to different persons or things.
- No contradiction exists between passages that involve different time elements.
- No contradiction exists between verses that employ phraseology in different senses.
- Supplementation is not the same as contradiction.
- One need show only the possibility of harmonization between two passages that appear to conflict in order to negate the force of an alleged discrepancy.

7. The differences in various Bible accounts of the same events actually demonstrate the independence of the writers and prove that they were not in collusion.

- **God is pleased & displeased with creation:**

Gen 1:31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Gen 6:6 And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

- Judas performed miracles & is called the “son of perdition”

Mt 10:1-18

Jn 17:12 and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Jn 12:6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

13:2 And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him,

- **Time of Jesus' crucifixion**

Mk 15:25 Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.

Jn 19:14 Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"

- **John the Baptist is called Elijah**

Mt 11:14 And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.

Jn 1:21 And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.”

Lk 1:17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

- Paul's claim to be righteous and the "chief of sinners"

Phil 3:6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

1 Tim 1:15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

- **God loves & hates**

Ps 45:7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.

119:104 Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

Rom 11:22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

Jn 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

- How could Paul be perfect & imperfect at the same time

Phil 3:12,15 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ... ¹⁵Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

1 Cor 14:20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

Eph 4:13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;