What About Errors?

The Bible is full of errors. That's what critics sometimes say. Can you trust a book when there are so many errors?

Here, we are not talking about the variations found in the ancient manuscripts. Scholars are fairly well settled on what the original text said. And none of the variations in the manuscripts affects Christian doctrine. (See the section: Reliably Transmitted.)

Instead, the issue to be addressed here is what to do when a passage in the Bible appears to either contain an outright error or to contradict another passage in the Bible.

The issue of "errors" in the Bible is one Christians have dealt with for years. I think it is fair to say that sometimes Bible critics are looking for a reason to cast doubt on the reliability of Scripture and quickly conclude that there cannot possibly be any reasonable explanation for the supposed error or contradiction. If someone identifies an error/contradiction/difficulty in the Bible, it's quite likely a possible solution can be found in one of these books:
- *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* by Gleason L. Archer. 1982, 2011.
- *Difficulties in the Bible Updated. Alleged Errors and Contradictions* by R. A. Torrey and Edward Andrews. 2011. Updated edition of Torrey's 1907 work.
- *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties: Clear and Concise Answers from Genesis to Revelation* by Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe. 1992, 2008. Revision of *When Critics Ask*.
- *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties* by Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe. 1992-2004.
- *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible* by J. Carl Laney. 1997.
- *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* by Gleason Archer. 1982.
  (This book is apparently available online at:
  https://truth4freedom.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/encyclopedia-of-bible-difficulties.pdf)
- *Bible Difficulties and Seeming Contradictions* by William Arndt, Robert Hoerber, and Walter Roehrs. Revised edition of Arndt's earlier work.
- *Bible Difficulties* by William Arndt. 1932.
- *Difficulties in the Bible* by R. A. Torrey. 1907.
- *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible* by John W. Haley. Originally published in 1874. Newer printings are available.

Online resources include:
- Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties.
  https://truth4freedom.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/encyclopedia-of-bible-difficulties.pdf
  (This may be an online edition of the book by Gleason Archer named above.)
- Solutions to Bible "Errors". https://defendinginerrancy.com/bible-difficulties/

Here are some thoughts about finding a resolution to a supposed error or contradiction.
- Understand the immediate context.
- Understand the wider context, how the passage fits with other passages in the Bible.
- Try to understand how the passage may have been affected by the culture of the time.

- Use a Greek or Hebrew dictionary to gain an understanding of a word or words in the original language. There are, for example, three different Greek words translated "love", each carrying a slightly different meaning.
- Understand that in some cases, phrases used are not meant to be taken literally.
- Understand that the problem may lie in one's interpretation of the passage in question.
- Understand that some numbers may be rounded or approximations.
- Allow that a "quote" of an older passage found in a later writing (ex. New Testament writer quoting an Old Testament writing) may/will not be word-for-word. This could be due to the translation of the passage from one language to another. Old Testament writers wrote in Hebrew; New Testament in Greek. Or it could be that the audience may have been used to hearing a paraphrase of the passage in question and that the writer/speaker simply phrased something in a way the audience would have been familiar with.
- Understand that because there is no current archaeological support for a passage doesn't mean that archaeological support will not be found later. There have been many times when "errors" were assumed due to lack of archaeological support. And many times later discoveries have shown that there was no error. (See the section: Supported by Archaeology.)
- Understand that a passage may contain a partial report of something and not a full report. For example, if a person viewing an event says there were seven men and another person says there were nine, is one of them wrong? It could be that the first person only saw seven of the nine men. In some cases, it may be that both reports contain only a portion of an event. For example, a person could say that they saw an individual wearing a blue jacket standing next to a car and a second person could say they saw an individual wearing a blue jacket running away from a car. Could it be that they were both right? that either there were two different individuals in blue jackets or one individual who stood next to a car and then later ran from it?

For more information on what one might consider when dealing with Bible difficulties, check the following:
- Ten Principles When Considering Alleged Bible Contradictions.
  https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/ten-principles-when-considering-alleged-bible-contradictions/
- Are There Any Errors in the Bible?
  https://www.namb.net/apologetics-blog/are-there-any-errors-in-the-bible/

If you are believe that you have identified an error/contradiction in the Bible, be open to the possibility that there is a reasonable solution and check the above resources for an answer. If you are a Christian and run into to someone who says the Bible is full of errors, ask that person for an example. Then check one of the above resources for a solution and get back to that person with the information.

For more information on alleged Bible errors/contradictions/difficulties, see:
　　Isn't the Bible Full of Errors?
　　https://www.bethinking.org/is-the-bible-reliable/isnt-the-bible-full-of-errors