

HARD QUESTIONS

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HARD QUESTIONS

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK...
DON'T BE AFRAID TO ANSWER.

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.” (1 Kings 10:1)

By Stephen Baker, M. Min.

THE NATIONS FOR CHRIST
DALTON, GEORGIA

Hard Questions: Don't Be Afraid to Ask...Don't Be Afraid to Answer
Published by: The Nations For Christ

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Printed in the U.S.A.
ISBN: 978-0-6152-0875-6

Cover Design by: Stephen Baker
Cover Photo: by April Baker. The photo is a view of the sea from
Dunluce Castle in Northern Ireland.

Scripture Quotations are from the Authorized (KJV) Holy Bible.

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.” (1 Kings 10:1)

When the queen of the south¹ came to visit Solomon, the famous Jewish king, she attempted to test his legendary wisdom with hard questions. The queen was skeptical, but Solomon's intellect and kingdom proved to be much better than she could have imagined.

Perhaps you have some hard questions about Christianity and the Bible. Maybe you have been asked some tough questions about them. Here are the answers. This book attempts to make you think, and challenges you to examine what you believe in the light of the Bible. Solomon answered all of his royal visitor's questions. Perhaps we will answer yours, or at least, challenge you to find the answers.

If you are a Christian, this book will equip you with the knowledge of how to answer the tough questions that skeptics and seekers ask. As believers in Jesus Christ, we should take seriously the challenge from the Bible: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15)

1. The queen of Sheba was also known as the queen of the south in the Bible. (Matthew 12:42; Luke 11:31) Sheba was located in modern-day Yemen in Western Asia.

PART ONE
QUESTIONS ABOUT
THE BIBLE

CHAPTER 1
WHAT ABOUT ALL OF THE CONTRADICTIONS IN THE
BIBLE? DON'T THEY PROVE THAT IT ISN'T TRUE?

Have you ever read the Bible all the way through? Do you know how many books make up the Old and New Testaments? Can you name all of the books of the Bible? If your answer is “no,” then how do you know for sure that the Bible isn't true and that there are contradictions in it? Let us suppose that I said, “I don't believe that Shakespeare wrote Macbeth because it is full of contradictions.” Someone who is a teacher of literature might argue, “But have you ever read Macbeth?”

“No, I have never read it, at least, not in its entirety.”

“What contradictions have you found in Macbeth?”

“People tell me that there are contradictions in Macbeth. No one in his right mind would believe that Shakespeare wrote it. Who is Shakespeare anyway?” You see the point. If you have never carefully read the whole Bible, don't know how many books are in it and do not know the names of those books, then how can you be sure that there are contradictions in the Bible? Is it not fair to say that we should thoroughly study something before passing judgment on it? I challenge you to study the Bible. Learn it. Read it carefully, in its entirety, and then see if there are contradictions in it.

Most of the supposed contradictions in the Bible can be explained with thorough study. For instance, in the four biographies of Jesus' life given to us in the books of the Bible called the Gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; different accounts are given about the same subject. The same stories are told, but different aspects of those stories are given. Critics claim that these are contradictions. Are they contradictions or just different details of the same event? If I were to go to a party and walk around the room, I might hear bits and pieces of an event being discussed. I might pick up the names of the parties involved from one person, and the location of the event from another. Different individuals would give me different details. When all of these details are put together, I have the whole story. The Gospels work in the same way. In Matthew, I see Jesus as the King of the Jews. In Mark, I see Him as the Suffering Servant. In Luke, I see Him as the Son of Man, and in John I see Him as the Son of God. Matthew was

written to appeal to the Jewish mind, Mark to the Roman, Luke to the Greek and John to everyone. John gives stories that Matthew, Mark and Luke do not. Different accounts of the crucifixion include different details. For example: In Matthew the sign that was placed over the cross where Jesus hung read, "...THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." (Matthew 27:37) Now read the different accounts given in Mark, Luke and John.

"And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS." (Mark 15:26)

"And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." (Luke 23:38)

"And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS." (John 19:19)

Reporters covering a story in modern newspapers also write different details. When reading a news story, it is best, if possible, to consult several different accounts to get the whole picture. The same thing is true in the Gospels. When we put all of the writings above the cross together, they form the whole sentence: "THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS."

In the Old Testament book of Daniel, a king is discussed in chapter five whose name was Belshazzar. The Bible tells us that he was the ruler of Babylon. For many years, skeptics claimed that this king never existed—that the writer of Daniel fabricated his life in order to make a good story. Archeology had produced no records of him. All known evidence said that a man named Nabonidus was the king of Babylon during this period. Since then, archeologists have discovered an abundance of evidence for the existence of Belshazzar. King Nabonidus was indeed the last ruler of Babylon, but he had a son whom he appointed as co-regent while he traveled. This co-ruler was the Belshazzar of Daniel five. As co-regent, Belshazzar was second in authority under his father. That is why, in Daniel 5:29, king Belshazzar rewarded Daniel by appointing him to be the third ruler in the kingdom of Babylon. "Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom." (Daniel 5:29)

There are many things in the Bible that, at first, do not appear to make sense. Would you expect a book authored by God to be always easy to understand? The Bible is full of “paradoxes,” seeming contradictions. For instance, the Bible tells me in Matthew 1:1 that Jesus Christ is “the son of David.” Genealogies were very important to the Jewish people and this one was particularly important because it fulfilled prophecies from the Old Testament. When the Bible says that Jesus Christ is “the son of David,” it simply means that He was a descendent of David, the second king of Israel. In Matthew 9:27 Jesus is also called the “son of David,” as He is in Matthew 12:23, 15:22, and many similar passages of Scripture. However, towards the end of the book, this exchange takes place between Jesus and the religious leaders of the day.

“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.” (Matthew 22:41-46)

Jesus poses the confusing question, “If David called Christ 'Lord,' a superior, then how can He be David's son? This is a seeming contradiction; a paradox. However, the answer is found in John, chapter one. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” (John 1:1-5) Here, the word “Word” is another name for Jesus Christ. The Bible says that Jesus Christ was in the beginning. In the beginning, He already was existing. The Bible says that in the beginning, He was with God and was God. This goes into the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. God is one God, existing in three eternal Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If you don't completely understand that, don't worry. Neither do I. If we could fully understand everything about God, then He wouldn't be much of a God would He? The Bible does not use the word, “Trinity,” but it definitely teaches that God is one God existing in three persons and Christians typically

use the word “Trinity” to express this idea.

Jesus has always existed because God is eternal. That is why David was able to call Him Lord back in the Old Testament. But, the Bible goes on to say, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) There was a point in time when the “Word” was made flesh. That's what we celebrate at Christmas. There was a day when Jesus Christ, the eternal God, became like us. He became a man. Jesus did this without ceasing to be God. In His human body, He still accepted worship as God, because He never stopped being God when He became man.

Now the paradox is solved! David called Jesus Lord because He is Lord, but He is also the son of David because He became a man. His mother, Mary, was a descendant of David. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the Son of God and David's son (descendent) all at the same time. The seeming contradiction becomes a wonderful truth for us, because as a man, Jesus Christ can understand what we are going through and the problems we face. He can weep with us when we suffer loneliness or loss or sorrow. He knows what it is to lose a friend, because he wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus in John, chapter eleven. As a man, Jesus can sympathize with us, but as God, He is all powerful, able to help us, hear and answer our prayers, forgive our sins and save us from an eternity of Hell!

Don't let supposed “contradictions” in the Bible keep you from finding the peace, comfort and assurance that comes through faith in Jesus Christ and His Word.