Introduction to Bible Difficulties and   
Bible Contradictions

     Bible difficulties, or apparent Bible contradictions, exist.  The opponents of Christianity often use them in their attempts to discredit Christianity.  Sometimes these attacks undermine the faith of Christians who either don't understand the issues or don't have the resources to deal with them.    
     Opponents of Christianity will cite what they consider a Bible contradiction or difficulty by comparing one verse to another (or more) that seems to disagree with the first. In doing this, several verses are often referenced as being contradictory or problematic.  Therefore, to make this section of CARM easy to use, it is arranged by verse for easy lookup.  Since many of the same "difficulties" deal with one verse in opposition to another or even several others, I have listed all the verses addressed in the same answer.  This makes the initial list look larger than it really is.  For example, how many animals did Noah bring into the ark?  Genesis 6:19-20 says two while Gen. 7:2-3 mentions seven.  Therefore, both verses are listed and both links point to the same answer.

**The Originals are Inspired, not the copies.**

     What a lot of Christians don't know is that the autographs (original writings) are inspired, not the copies. The autographs are the original writings, the original documents penned by the biblical writers.  The copies are copies **of** inspired documents.  The copies are not themselves "inspired"; that is, they have no guarantee of being 100% textually pure.  But don't worry, the Bible manuscripts are 98.5% textually pure and only are very small amount of information is in question because we have repetitive facts, instructions, and information found elsewhere in the Bible.  Nevertheless, through the copying method over the years, various textual problems have arisen.  Following is a list of the types of errors that have occurred in copying the manuscripts.  I've used English as examples instead of going into the original languages for examples.

* **Dittography** - Writing twice what should have been written once.
  + A good example would be writing "latter" instead of "later."  "Latter" means nearest the end.  "Later" means after something else.
* **Fission** - Improperly dividing one word into two words.
  + Example:  "nowhere" into "now here."
* **Fusion** - Combining the last letter of one word with the first letter of the next word.
  + "Look it is there in the cabinet... or Look it is therein the cabinet."
* **Haplography** - Writing once what should have been written twice.
  + A good example would be "later" instead of "latter."  "Later" means after something else.  "Latter" means nearest the end.
* **Homophony** - Writing a word with a different meaning for another word when both words have the exact same pronunciation.
  + Meat and meet have the exact same sound but different meanings.  Also, there and their and they're are another example.
* **Metathesis** - An improper exchange in the order of letters.
  + Instead of writing "mast," someone writes "mats," or "cast" and cats."

**Does this mean we cannot trust the Bible?**

     Does this mean that the Bible we hold in our hand is not inspired? Not at all. Inspiration comes from God and when He inspired the Bible, it was perfect. Our copies of the original documents are not perfect, but they are very close to being so.  The critics often erringly assume that even the copies are supposed to be perfect.  But when we point out that God never said the copies would be perfect, they then ask how can the Bible be trusted at all?  Quite simply, it is redundant in its facts and information and the amount of material that has any variation at all is so minute compared to the whole Bible that the Bible is considered to be almost 100% accurately copied.  Furthermore, the copyist errors present no problems doctrinally.  
     Still, some will say that since there are, for example, copyist errors then we must throw out the entire Bible.  But this argument is very week.  Are we to throw out a book science text book because there is a misspelled word or two in it?  Does this mean that the whole book cannot be trusted?  Of course not.  Furthermore, compared to other ancient documents, the New Testament, for example, has far more textual evidence in its favor than any other ancient writing.  Please consider the chart below.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Author** | **When Written** | **Earliest Copy** | **Time Span** | **No. of Copies** |
| **Homer (Iliad)** | 900 BC | 400 BC | 500 years | 643 |
| **Ceasar  (The Gallic Wars)** | 100 - 44 BC | 900 AD | 1,000 years | 10 |
| **Plato (Tetralogies)** | 427 - 347 BC | 900 AD | 1,200 years | 7 |
| **Aristotle** | 384 - 322 BC | 1,100 AD | 1,400 years | 49 |
| **Herodotus (History)** | 480 - 425 BC | 900 AD | 1,300 years | 8 |
| **Euripedes** | 480 - 406 BC | 1,100 AD | 1,500 years | 9 |
| **New Testament** | 50 - 90 A.D. | 130 AD | 30 years | 24,000 |
| This chart was adapted from charts in Evidence that Demands a Verdict, by Josh McDowell, 1979, pages 42 and 43. | | | | |

     If the Bible cannot be trusted as being reliable because it has only a small percentage of copyist errors, then neither can the above documents be trusted that have far less textual support.  In other rods, the critics, to be consistent, would have to reject the Iliad, The Gallic Wars, Plato's Tetralogies, Aristotle's works, Hoerodetus' history, and Euripedes' writings.  Are the critics willing to disregard all those writings -- which are far less well preserved -- if they throw out the Bible as being reliable?  They should if they are fair in how they apply their criticism.  But, since basically no one discards those writings as being so bad they can't be trusted, why would anyone apply the double standard to the Bible . . . unless they have an agenda.  
     We can see that the Bible is an ancient document that has withstood thousands of years of transmission with remarkable accuracy and clarity, far more so than the great works of old listed in the chart above.  We can trust it to be what it says it is:  the word of God.

Don't Gen. 1 and 2 present contradictory creation accounts?

* **Genesis 1  
  -** Day one - heavens and earth are created.  *"Let there be light."*  Day and Night.  **-** Day two - Atmospheric waters separated from earth waters. **-** Day three - Land appears separating the seas.  Vegetation is made.   
  **-** Day four - Sun, moon, stars are made.   
  **-** Day five - Sea life and birds are made.  
  **-** Day six - Land animals, creeping things, and man (male and female) are made.
* **Genesis 2**  
  States heaven and earth were created.  no plant yet on earth, no rain yet, no man.  but, a mist rose watering the surface of the ground.  Then the Lord formed man from dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.  Then God made Eve.

     There is no contradiction between Genesis 1 and 2.  Genesis 1 is a detailed explanation of the six days of creation, day by day.  Genesis two is a recap and a more detailed explanation of the sixth day, the day that Adam and Eve were made.  The recap is stated in Gen. 2:4, *"This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven."* Then, Moses goes on to detail the creation of Adam and Eve as is seen in verses 7 thru 24 of Gen. 2.  Proof that it is not a creative account is found in the fact that animals aren't even mentioned until after the creation of Adam.  Why?  Probably because their purpose was designated by Adam.  They didn't need to be mentioned until after Adam was created.

How many Gods are there, one or many?  
  Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10; 44:6,8  
and Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; 1 Cor. 8:5; I John 5:7

1. **One God**
   1. ([Deuteronomy 6:4](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Deut/Deut_6.htm#4 )) - *"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!"*
   2. ([Isaiah 43:10](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Isaiah/Isaiah_43.htm#10 )) - *". . . Before Me [YHWH] there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me."*
   3. ([Isaiah 44:6](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Isaiah/Isaiah_44.htm#6 )) - *". . . there is no God besides Me."*
   4. ([Isaiah 44:8](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Isaiah/Isaiah_44.htm#8 )) - *". . . And you are My witnesses.  Is there any God besides Me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none."*
2. **Many gods**
   1. ([Genesis 1:26](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_1.htm#And)) - *"Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness . . ."*
   2. ([Genesis 3:22](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_3.htm#21 )) - *"And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil . . ."*
   3. ([Genesis 11:7](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_11.htm#1 )) - *"Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."*
   4. ([1 Corinthians 8:5](http://www.carm.org/kjv/1Cor/1cor_8.htm#1 )) - *"For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords")."*
   5. ([1 John 5:8](http://www.carm.org/kjv/1John/1John_5.htm#7 )) *- "For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement."*

     The Bible tells us that there is only one God in all existence ([Isaiah 43:10](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Isaiah/Isaiah_43.htm#10 ); [44:6](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Isaiah/Isaiah_44.htm#6 ),[8](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Isaiah/Isaiah_44.htm" \l "8 )). However, it also mentions "other gods."  For example there is Adrammelech and Anammelech  ([2 Kings 17:31](http://www.carm.org/kjv/2Kings/2Kings_17.htm#31 )), Asherah ([1 Kings 18:19](http://www.carm.org/kjv/1Kings/1Kings_18.htm#18 )), Baal ([Judges 3:1](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Judges/Judges_3.htm#1 )), Chemosh ([Num. 21:29](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Num/Num_21.htm#29 )), Dagon ([1 Sam. 5:2](http://www.carm.org/kjv/1Sam/1Sam_5.htm#1 )), Molech ([Lev. 18:21](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Lev/Lev_18.htm#20 ); [20:2-5](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Lev/Lev_20.htm#1 )), etc.   The Bible is not contradicting itself. When the Bible speaks of other gods it is speaking of false gods that have no true existence.  [Gal. 4:8](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gal/gal_4.htm#But) says, *"Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods."*  See also, [Isaiah 37:19](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Isaiah/Isaiah_37.htm#19 ) and [Jeremiah 2:11](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Jer/Jer_2.htm#11 ).  God tells us that he alone is the true God and that all of the invented gods of man do not exist except in their own minds. So, we can see that the Bible is not contradicting itself regarding how many gods there are in existence. There is only one.  
     Note: in the verses in Genesis that have God saying "Let us make..., Let us go down . . . , etc." are clues to the Trinitarian nature of God. God is a [Trinity](http://www.carm.org/doctrine/trinity.htm) of persons: a Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. There are not three Gods, but one. There are those who insist that the Trinity is polytheistic. But it is not. Trinitarians believe in a single being who is God.

Doesn't God saying "Adam where are you?" show God didn't know something?  
Genesis 3:9

* ([Genesis 3:9](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_3.htm#8 )) - *"Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"*

     The context of this verse is immediately after Adam had sinned.  *"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10And he said, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself,"* ([Gen. 3:8-10](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_3.htm#8 )).   Does this mean that God didn't know something?  Not at all.  Someone can easily ask a question to which they know the answer.  Usually, the reason to do that is to point something out or teach something.  Obviously, Adam and Eve had sinned.  God asked, *"Adam where are you?"*  Where was Adam?  He was hiding from God.  Adam's sin had destroyed his fellowship with the Lord.  God knew this and He was pointing it out to Adam.  It is a question we need to ask of ourselves?  Where am I?  Am I in fellowship with God or in rebellion against Him?

God multiplies the pain of women   
in child bearing.  
Genesis 3:16

* ([Genesis 3:16](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_3.htm#14 )) - *"To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."*

     Why would God increase the pain of childbirth because of Eve's disobedience to Him?  Some think it is an unfair penalty to make all women suffer for Eve's sin.  
     The answer lies in two things.  First we must understanding that Eve was the means God commanded to fill the earth with people.  Her union with Adam was supposed to produce children for the perfect world that God had created.  But, Eve rebelled against God.  Since sin brings pain and suffering, it was a natural consequence that she have pain and suffering in the very thing for which she was brought forth because she had rebelled against God.  
     Second, Adam was her "head."  This is a biblical concept where the male head of the family represents the family.  We see this in [Heb. 7:7-10](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Heb/Heb_7.htm#7 ) when Levi, the distant descendant of Abraham, is said to have paid tithes to Melchizedek while still in the loins of his Father Abraham even though Levi wasn't even alive at the time.  In other words, Abraham represented his descendents because he was the "head" of his family and descendents.    
      Adam was the "head" of Eve.  When Adam fell, he represented his descendents.  They then inherited the sinful nature that Adam brought upon himself as well as the effects of sin upon both he and Eve.  Hence, their descendents would suffer the effects of sin in their persons by being born of sinful parents.  The pain of childbirth is simply the result of that sin.

Where did Cain get his wife?  
Genesis 4:17

1. ([Gen. 4:17](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_4.htm#17 )) - *"Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. 17And Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son,"* (NASB).

     We see in the Bible in [Genesis 3](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_3.htm#1 ) where Adam and Eve were cursed and sent out of the Garden of Eden.  In [Genesis 4](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_4.htm#1 A), Cain kills Abel.  In [Genesis 4:17](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_4.htm#17 ) above we see that Cain had relations with his wife.  Where did he get his wife?  The answer is simple.  Cain married one of his sisters.  
     [Genesis 5:4](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_5.htm#1 ) says, *"Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters."* We see that Adam and Eve had many sons and daughters.  The genetic lineage of Adam and Eve was perfect so marrying a sister wasn't going to cause birth defects.  It wasn't until much later, during the time of Moses, that incest was forbidden as the genetic pool became less and less able to stand interbreeding. *"‘No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD,"* ([Lev. 18:6](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Lev/Lev_18.htm#1 )).

Did people really live hundreds of years according to Genesis?  
Genesis 5

1. **Adam lived 930 years** ([Gen. 5:5](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_5.htm#1 )) - *"And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died."*
2. **Seth lived 912 years** ([Gen. 5:8](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_5.htm#1 )) - *"And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died."*
3. **Methuselah lived 969 years** ([Gen. 5:27](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_5.htm#27 )) - *"And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died."*

    After the fall, the genetic line of Adam and his descendents was very pure, so their health would have been incredible.  Living that long would not have been a problem.   Also, some theologians think that there was a canopy of water that engulfed the entire earth and that it was released at the time of the flood.  *"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life , in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened,"* ([Gen. 7:11](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_7.htm#10 )).  The "floodgates of the sky" are sometimes alluded to as great amounts of water suspended in the sky.  Also, no rain is recorded in the Bible until after the flood which seems to support this idea.  This canopy, if it is true, might have provided some sort of protection from the sun's harmful rays.  We can't know for sure and it is only a theory. Nevertheless, after the flood, the lifespan of people on earth was drastically reduced.  "*Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years,"* ([Gen. 6:3](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_6.htm#1 )).  Whether or not this reduced canopy had any affect on human lifespan may never be known.

Did anyone ascend into heaven   
before Jesus or not?  
Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11 and John 3:13

1. **Yes**
   1. ([Genesis 5:24](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_5.htm#24 )) - *"And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."*
   2. ([2 Kings 2:11](http://www.carm.org/kjv/2Kings/2Kings_2.htm#11 )) - *"Then it came about as they were going along and talking, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven."*
   3. ([Hebrews 11:5](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Heb/Heb_11.htm#3 )) - *"By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God."*
2. **No**
   1. ([John 3:13](http://www.carm.org/kjv/John/john_3.htm#12 )) - *"And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man"*

The answer is simple when you understand the Jewish concept of the universe.  They believed in three heavens.  The first was the atmosphere where the trees, clouds, and birds are.  The second is the realm of the stars, planets, sun, and moon.  And the third heaven was the very dwelling place of God.  In the Old Testament in [Genesis 5](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_5.htm#24 ) and [2 Kings 2](http://www.carm.org/kjv/2Kings/2Kings_2.htm#11 ) above, they were not taken into the very dwelling place of God, but into the heavens; that is, they were taken up into the sky.  Exactly where is in debate.  It isn't until after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ were those who had died before, in faith, taken into the highest heaven. [Ephesians 4:8](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Eph/eph_4.htm#4 ) is often referred to as a supporting scripture for this belief.  It says, *"When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."* Furthermore, when Paul said he was caught up to the third heaven ([2 Cor. 12:2](http://www.carm.org/kjv/2Cor/2cor_12.htm#1 )), he was referring to the very dwelling place of God.

**Biblical demonstration of the three heavens**

1. **First heaven - Earth Atmosphere**
   1. ([Deuteronomy 11:17](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Deut/Deut_11.htm#17 )) - "*Then the LORD's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce...."*
   2. ([Deuteronomy 28:12](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Deut/Deut_28.htm#12 )) - "*The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands."*
2. **Second Heaven - Outer Space**
   1. ([Psalm 19:4,6](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Psalms/Psalm_19.htm#1)) - "*In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun... It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other;..."*
   2. ([Jeremiah 8:2](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Jer/Jer_8.htm#1 )) - *They will be exposed to the sun and the moon and all the stars of the heavens which they have loved and served...."*
3. **Third Heaven - Where God dwells**
   1. ([1 Kings 8:27](http://www.carm.org/kjv/1Kings/1Kings_8.htm#But)) - *"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you."*
   2. ([Psalm 2:4](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Psalms/Psalm_2.htm#1 )) - *The One enthroned in heaven laughs; The LORD scoffs at them."*

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Does the Lord change or not?  
Malachi 3:6; and Genesis 6:6,7; Exodus 32:14; Jonah 3:10

1. **God does not change**
   1. ([Malachi 3:6](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Mal/Mal_3.htm#1 )) - *"For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."*
2. **God does change**
   1. ([Genesis 6:6,7](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Gen/Gen_6.htm#1 )) - *"And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7And the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."*
   2. ([Exodus 32:14](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Ex/Ex_32.htm#14 )) - *"So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people."*
   3. ([Jonah 3:10](http://www.carm.org/kjv/Jonah/Jonah_3.htm#10 )) - *"When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it."*

     When God says that He does not change, He is speaking about His nature and character.  But this does not mean that He cannot change how He works with people throughout history.   
     When we see God changing His mind, we are seeing it from a human perspective.  Since God knows all things from all eternity, He as always known the ultimate plan that He would carry out; even the plan to "change His mind."  As we have seen in Jonah's account of Nineveh.  They repented and God relented from the destruction that was to come upon the inhabitants.  Of course, God knew this would happen and instituted the warning to them in order to bring about their repentance.  There is no mystery here.

<http://www.carm.org/bible_difficulties.htm>

see for remainder of chart and more ‘difficulties’