

Winnowing Wheat and Chaff

God has an interesting way of separating those who wish to believe, from those who choose to scoff or discount. He applies this techniques in various ways to blind or increase spiritual vision.

Military Tactics

When the Nazi generals in WWII received news that Patton was removed from command of Seventh Army because he slapped a soldier, they did not believe it. How could a military force remove one's best general for slapping a lowly soldier? This doubt then led to further miscalculation that Patton was reviewing Pas de Calais as the possible landing site for the coming invasion of Europe. All logic of the military machine would side with the Nazi thinking. Removing a general for slapping a soldier was a laughable fantasy. Building on the foundation of this being false information, they then followed the movements of General Patton and the phantom army built around him—a decoy, so to speak. It worked. Much of Hitler's force was moved north, leaving the Normandy coast relatively under-defended.

Fantastic vs. Logical

There is a war going on now in the unseen realm of the spirit. We, as physical beings, cannot see what takes place in this dimension. As one who has studied the Bible for 37 years, I have come to an understanding that God has placed subjects of doubt in both the text, as well as our physical world.

Why, for example, would God create the magnificent dinosaur, yet make scant mention of it in His Word? We can understand that the Bible's chief message is that of the redemption of man from sin, and not that of proving or disproving science or paleontology. However, why create them at all only to have them wiped out by the flood or other means? Could it be that God is using the dinosaur as a sidetrack to those who refuse to believe?

During the days of Noah, God could have wiped out the entire earth's population with one angel. Why a flood? And why a boat full of at least two of every kind of creature? Is this not a mind-boggling way to do something that can be accomplished in a much more believable way, such as a rampant sexually transmitted disease? Why the bizarre, fantastic destruction of a worldwide flood? If that were not enough, to place such a boat at the top of a mountain in an unstable political environment such as Turkey, where it cannot be studied or verified?

The flood created two completely different views of earth's geology, both of which are completely opposed to one another. The Grand Canyon can be viewed as being easily cut from a world-wide flood over a matter of a few years. Yet also, the Grand Canyon can be viewed as being cut over millions of years via simple erosion. Which is true? Each has their valid argument. And hence comes a point of understanding regarding the unseen warfare in the unseen world.

Free Will Requires Choice

When God created the Garden of Eden; He put two trees in the midst. One was the Tree of Life; the other was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God then warned that one could eat of any tree in the garden save one—the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Now, why would God put a tree right in the middle of the garden which would introduce death, suffering, decay and entropy? Why did He not just make the garden a gorgeous place to live in harmony with Him forever? The answer is complex, but can be summed up by the statement, "Free will without choice is an illusion."

So what is the big deal about free will? To God, it is everything. Those with children understand that there is a big difference between programming a computer to wake you up in the morning with "good-morning father-I-love-you" and having your own little son or daughter jump on the bed at the crack of dawn yelling "Good morning daddy! I love you!" The computer would eventually become annoying—it is not real. However, your son or daughter would be a joy every moment of their growing up.

The Almighty God has a myriad of angels proclaiming "Holy, holy, holy"--but they have seen Him, so it is easy. Think what it means to God, having NOT seen Him, yet lifting your arms and proclaim, "Good morning Lord! I love you!" This is the core element of faith. Faith is not believing in something because you were brought up that way, or be condemned if you don't do such and such—no, far from it. Faith is the purest form of free will choice. It chooses to believe the unbelievable—just because God said so. And believe me; God pushes this envelope in many ways.

So why does He do this? We may get a hint from Jesus when He prayed, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes." The Bible has been purposely designed to confound the wise, yet reveal incredible facts regarding the seen and unseen world to the lowly and unlearned. This may be a good reason why He chose fishermen over scholars. When asked why Jesus spoke in parables, He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them." Jesus seemed to be saying that speaking in parables was like giving an eternal message in an idiomatic code. Those who are searching, God will open the eyes of understanding. While those who only choose to mock or doubt, God will blind. Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."

In the days of the Bible, to separate precious wheat from useless chaff, they would toss up both in a windy area and that which is chaff will be blown to the side, while the heavier kernel will fall into the lower pile—so too with God's Word. God purposely introduces fantastic ideas to winnow those who do not wish to believe, with those who do. This also applies to how we comprehend the pages of scripture.

Reading with Presupposition

There are several ways to read the Bible. If you read it as a piece of literature, then that is what you will receive. If you read it as a textual critic, looking for contradictions, added text, and inaccuracies, you will find them—though they can be argued, it will not change what you perceive regarding the textual doubt. Read it as a bunch of mythological stories, you will get that, and only that and nothing more.

If you read it as illogical fantasy, it will provide a great deal of fuel for your fire of consternation. This attitude will then reflect upon those who believe the Bible is true. It is amazing how hostile people can get when they find out someone actually believes what the Bible says.

On the other hand, if you read it with the presupposition that it is God's Word written to guide you to eternal salvation and 100% assurance of life after death, it will provide that and more. So the man who tries to defy God's existence with logic and science, will be given ample proof to bolster their position. The same for the man who trusts that God's Word is true. Logic and science will bolster his position as well. Each of whom are traveling, but in opposite directions. This is the crux of free will, and will dictate our eternal position after we shed the restraints of the physical. Only a book written from the standpoint of eternity can prepare us for such a destination. The rest is just wishful thinking that perhaps the unknown hereafter is not that bad. However, that is not very reassuring, and science will not make you feel that much better about it, because it cannot be explored or examined for preparation. Science is limited only to the physical. Your soul is eternal. The Bible deals with what is eternal where science cannot venture. The physical realm will pass away, and science will pass away with it. What you want to do is latch onto that which will last forever, and that is the Word of God.

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." - Matthew 24:35

The most important aspect of faith is opening and looking through your spiritual eyes. There are things hidden from view of the faithless and intellectual skeptic. As long as you read or listen from this point of view, you will be part of the army that directs its troops toward the decoy.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. - 1 Corinthians 2:14

Supposed Contradictions

Contradictions are one of the many ways God applies the decoy method. The wording of the Bible will leave the scoffer laughing in triumph, while the believer will first puzzle over it, ask God to reveal what is going on in a particular passage, and then find that there is actually more to it than just what is on the surface.

One example of this can be found in the question, "How old was Jehoiachin?"

First, a little background. Jehoiakim was king of Judah when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came in and took this southern kingdom into captivity. His reign was taken over by his son Jehoiachin (don't trip over the similar spelling). This is recorded twice in the scripture. The first is in II Kings 24:8.

Jehoiachin was *eighteen years old* when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.

The second is found in II Chronicles 36:9

Jehoiachin was *eight years old* when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months and ten days.

To the scoffer, the above is an obvious contradiction. He walks away and laughs and the idea that the Bible is without error, and mocks anyone who would believe such rubbish.

The unlearned believer chooses to trust God that there may more to this than what appears on the surface. They choose to trust God to handle the details that they do not understand. This is what is termed "mustard seed faith", and God is honored by the inherent trust.

Then there are the believers who know how to dig in to the text and look for the answer. They know that the Bible is without error, so there must be something more than what is on the surface. My mentor always taught me, rejoice when you find what appears to be a contradiction, for there may be a great treasure or insight to be found. And many times I have found this to be true.

So, after a little checking in the Hebrew, I was able to confirm that both scriptures above are correct. But how can this be? There is a difference of 10 years in comparison of both passages.

First, we must clarify the passages by exchanging the pronoun "he" for the actual target of the pronouns. In Kings 24, the Hebrew text is starting a new chapter. There is nothing to target the pronouns except for that which is in the first verse alone. So it would be rendered...

Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when *Jehoiachin* began to reign and *Jehoiachin* reigned in Jerusalem three months.

Chronicles 36 is different in that we are in the middle of the chapter and there is target identification of the pronouns. The previous verse speaks of his father Jehoiakim. So it would be rendered...

Jehoiachin was eight years old when [*his father*] *Jehoiakim* began to reign, and *Jehoiachin* reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem.

Now, let's confirm this. How long did Jehoiachin's father Jehoiakim rule? In verse 5 of Chronicles it states, "eleven years". Depending on when Jehoiachin was born and when the actual rule of Jehoiakim began, this could easily give us a space of ten years. So add the ten years to the eight, and we get eighteen.

This is not a contradiction, but rather a limitation of our finite language. The fault like in a failure in translation based on pronoun identification. In failing to take the context of the paragraphs in Hebrew into account, it is easy to see how such an occurrence could take place. But why did God frame the account in such a way as to be able to compare the two? The reason why God repeats accounts or instructions is what computer enthusiasts term "parity". The hard drive in a computer is not always perfect in its reading and writing. So to make up for errors that could occur, the designers use parity, which is writing the information twice, then comparing the two copies for accuracy.

A perfect example of this can be found in another supposed contradiction question, "Who killed Goliath?"

Of course we all know from I Samuel 17:50 that the young David slew Goliath. However we see that in II Samuel 21:19 it reads that Elhanan slew Goliath.

Again there was war at Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

I Chronicles 20:5 it states that Elhanan slew the *brother* of Goliath

Again there was war with the Philistines, and Elhanan the son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

Again the scoffer mocks the Bible citing the obvious contradiction. However, the diligent student will assume the Bible is correct and will seek to uncover the mystery of who killed Goliath.

If you lookup the two passages in the Young's Interlinear, you will see that the word "brother" is indeed found in the original Hebrew in the second Samuel text. However, it was not translated due to a slight distortion in one of the letters.

II Samuel 21:19

0853 תא 'eth ayth = untranslatable

I Chronicles 20:5

0251 אח אכח = Brother

In Hebrew, the three letters that look almost identical are the *Tav* "ת", the *Hay* "ה" and the *Khet* "ח". A distortion in the *Khet* of Second Samuel 21 caused it to look like a *Tav*, and thus render the two-letter word as untranslatable. Rather than researching the possible distortion, the translators chose to ignore it. This is parity in action. A tiny speck in the hide of the original scroll or a fleck of dry ink could add that little shoe on the end of the *Hay* letter, rendering it a *Tav*. God said regarding His scriptures...

"Search from the book of the LORD, and read: Not one of these shall fail; Not one shall lack her mate. For My mouth has commanded it, and His Spirit has gathered them." - Isaiah 34:16

Now, we can either believe God literally regarding His Word, or we can scoff and say that man has mistranslated or altered the text for his own agenda.

But why did God allow His Word to be viewed as having contradictions? Could this be another plan to blind those who scoff and refuse to believe, yet open the eyes of them that choose to know and come to Him?

Evolution vs. Intelligent Design

There is no debate more heated between the secular and the religious community than the issue of our origin. The secular side is convinced that we evolved from billions of years of chance mutation and natural selection through survival of the fittest. The religious side counter with the complexity of nature, life and the information systems in DNA as evidence of an intelligent designer.

This debate is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, think of it as yet another device of the Creator to winnow the wheat from the chaff. God purposely created the earth and its mechanisms in 6 evenings and mornings. The secular thinker scoffs at the silliness of the Genesis account, and takes pleasure in pitying or mocking those that do. But one must consider that if God is indeed God, then such a creation by a mere word or breath is far from an impossibility. The secular mind will not hear of such nonsense and would rather bask in the superior position of atheism rather than bow to the lowly superstitious. The result? The gulf between believer and unbeliever grows wider and wider as time creeps toward the final day.

Believing the Unbelievable

It was a difficult concept for the Nazi generals to believe that something as silly as a slapped soldier would be cause to relieve an army's best general. So they chose to believe it was planted information to distract them. God provides us clear choices on what we can choose to believe. There are some who say that it is all a fools' fantasy. There are others who see an eternal God who has the power to do and create whatever He pleases with but a word. Then there are those in the middle who try to mix the two—to find a compromise between the fantastic and the logical. God has purposely tailored physics, geology, the cosmos, as well as His Word with built-in points of doubt or fantastic events to promote disbelief. So that when belief does indeed occur, it is a product of pure faith—that free will has been exercised to its maximum state. How else can we possibly believe that the death of God incarnate on a cross 2,000 years ago could remit all past, present and future sin of the penitent? Such has to be done by faith and total trust in what God has promised in His Word. That everyone who believes in this Savior will indeed be saved.

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. - 1 Corinthians 1:18

To make matters worse, God uses man to propagate the message. Not by signs and wonders, but just the gentle teaching of the Bible.

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. - 1 Corinthians 1:21

This is a special coding system so that only those who read the Bible with a willing spirit will be able to grasp what it is saying. If you try and analyze it with your fleshly mind, you will see what appears as contradictions, inaccuracies, and inconsistencies.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. - 1 Corinthians 2:14

For those who choose not to believe and reject the provision of salvation (even though it is a free gift), then God will solidify that decision accordingly. As one revels in their disbelief, the heart becomes hardened to the need or desire for repentance, and any talk or witness of such will only irritate the hearer. The longer one travels in either direction, the more solidified they will become as time progresses.

Consider the various plagues that were used to convince Pharaoh to set the Hebrew slaves free from Egypt. Several signs and plagues were given to Pharaoh. Watch the progression of hardening that occurred in the book of Exodus.

7:13 Pharaoh's heart grew hard
7:22 Pharaoh's heart grew hard
8:15 Pharaoh hardened his heart
8:19 Pharaoh's heart grew hard
8:32 Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also
9:7 The heart of Pharaoh became hard
9:12 The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh
9:34 Pharaoh hardened his heart, he and his servants
10:1 [The Lord] hardened [Pharaoh's] heart and the hearts of his servants

Six different times, Pharaoh's heart was hardened by his own prideful choice. On the seventh, God gave him over to his own way by sealing his position of unbelief. This hardening then spread to those who surround him and the final hardening included them as well. People given over to their established personal doctrine, will most likely congregate with those who will support their stance. As a result, there grows a community of unbelief and mutual rejection of God's prompting to repentance.

The heart can be like like wax or clay. Heat will soften one substance, while the other will grow hard. Pharaoh was the example of the heart of the scoffer who at the heat of God's word, grew harder and harder in time. However, even a the material of the heart can be miraculously changed if one is willing to ask.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes." - Ezekiel 36:26-27a

Trusting in the Preposterous

Robert Anderson who was the Assistant Commissioner for Scotland Yard (who caught Jack the Ripper in 1891) took the book of Daniel as providing the date Messiah was to come. His incredible calculations pinpointed the day Jesus rode in to Jerusalem. For this and other deeds, he was knighted by Queen Victoria and became Sir Robert Anderson. However, he read other prophesies regarding Israel becoming a nation again and thought that this was much too preposterous to be literal. No nation, after being conquered and scattered, ever returned again to form a nation and a people. So it must have had some "allegorical" meaning. In 1948, thirty years after his death, Sir Robert Anderson was proven wrong. Basically, Anderson was great at hindsight, but failed miserably with foresight. (Ref. The Coming Prince by Sir Robert Anderson)

The Bible is a message system that defies logic and finds its way past the skeptical, analytical mind and into the trusting heart.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! -
Romans 11:33

If one wishes to know Him personally, it has to be done by faith. My children love me. Not because they know "how I tick", nor because they can debate with me. They love me because I am their dad, nothing more. Because they are mine, I will teach, admonish, discipline, protect and provide for them. All other children are on their own.

Conclusion

So why did God have a great fish swallow Jonah rather than another boat happen by and pull him out of the sea? Why did God make a donkey to speak to Balaam rather than a fellow prophet or make the sea part so that the Jewish people could walk on dry land rather than just an alternate route? This and many more subjects offer the choice of two major camps. Neither side are better or worse people than the other—this is not the point. It all comes down to who you will believe. The world and its majority, or the God of the Bible?

It all comes down to the creation of a people that will trust and believe without seeing. As Jesus said to Thomas,

“Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” - John 20:29

For God, it is all a matter of winnowing wheat and chaff.