

## SOME ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE...& THEIR ANSWERS!

**Introductory Comments:** The Bible is *always* under attack. This has been true in the past and continues to be so in the present. Consider this typically caustic example by a well-known atheist: “*The contradictions and illiteracies of the New Testament have filled up many books by eminent scholars, and have never been explained by any Christian authority except in the feeblest terms of ‘metaphor’ and ‘a Christ of faith.’ This feebleness derives from the fact that until recently, Christians could simply burn or silence anybody who asked any inconvenient questions. The Gospels are useful, however, in re-demonstrating the same point as their predecessor volumes, which is that religion is man-made.*”<sup>2</sup> (sic) Tact and truthfulness are obviously not that atheist’s strong suit.

But if Bible-believers are supposed to be intimidated or cowed by such ignorant, bombastic statements, we’re not. First of all, such allegations are false. Furthermore, such statements are a classic example of the hypocrisy of those who speak much of “*tolerance*” but display little, if any, of it—especially towards those who profess confidence in the Bible &/or faith in God & His Son Jesus Christ.

Such accusations should not be allowed to go unanswered, and thankfully they haven’t. For the interested Bible student there are a number of scholarly resources available which provide solid, extensive refutations to virtually all such attacks on the Bible & Christianity by skeptics & unbelievers.<sup>3</sup> That being the case, there is no need for me to reinvent the wheel. Consequently I wish to simply list a handful of the “biggest” alleged “errors” in the Bible that such skeptics and atheists regularly trot out, and supply brief answers to them. After reading through them I believe you will agree with me that if these are the biggest “problems” that skeptics can come up with, then such critics are really scratching the bottom of the barrel for things to argue about. I’ve deliberately taken most of the examples directly from several recent, currently popular books by atheists. Frankly, you would think they would learn and take a cue from history. As Criswell observes, “*The so-called errors of the bible are a very slippery lot. Just when you think you have your hands on one it evades you and disappears. In essence, these are not errors but difficulties which can be solved or explained. I read one time that in A.D. 1800 the French Institute in Paris had issued a list of 82 errors in the bible which they believed would destroy Christianity. Today not one of these so-called errors is received as such, for with new discoveries the difficulties have been cleared away. It is imperative to distinguish between a difficulty not yet solved and an error.*”<sup>4</sup> Currently there are about two dozen such difficulties that critics repeatedly bring up—even though plausible answers have given for all of them. It should also be pointed out that new discoveries continue to be made, which will undoubtedly shed further light on the few remaining questions.

It should also be pointed out that **just because you don’t understand something does not mean that it is an error.** Custer has well observed: “*At this point a definition of terms is in order. The Liberal will call anything in Scripture which he cannot explain an ‘error.’ This is a manifestation of his underlying assumption that Scripture is just another human book with all the human frailties and mistakes which an ordinary book has... Conservatives, on the other hand, will deny that any of these passages are errors. This is quite frankly a manifestation of his underlying assumption that Scripture is a uniquely inspired Book, and therefore perfectly trustworthy and infallible. Instead of calling these passages ‘errors,’ the Conservative would call them ‘problems’ or ‘difficulties’... He will not automatically assume that there are ‘errors’ in the Scripture. He would rather assume that his own understanding of the passages may be in error.*”<sup>5</sup>

Harold Lindsell perceptively comments: “*I do not wish to dismiss the questions that critics have raised about errors in Scripture with a casual wave of my hand. However, I do not think the problem areas constitute a threat to biblical infallibility nor do I think that there are any insoluble difficulties. This does not mean that I can provide a ready solution to every datum raised by those who oppose inerrancy. I can say, however, that a multitude of what formerly were difficulties have been solved, so that the detractors have had to back water again and again. But as each apparent discrepancy is resolved, another objection is raised. Although in hundreds of cases criticisms of Scripture have been shown to be unfounded, those who refuse to believe in inerrancy never seem to be satisfied. Why is this so? Does it not constitute a frame of mind that wants to disbelieve? Does it not reflect a viewpoint that says in effect, ‘I will not believe what the Scripture teaches about itself until every objection has been answered to my satisfaction’? Does not this tell us something about the nature of man... **May not the real difficulty be a want of biblical faith rather than a want of evidence?**”<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher Hitchens, “*God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*”, 2007, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Gleason L. Archer, “*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*” (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1982), W.A. Criswell, “*Why I Preach that the Bible is Literally True*” (Broadman Press: Nashville, TN, 1969), Stewart Custer, “*Does Inspiration Demand Inerrancy?*” (The Craig Press: Nutley, NJ, 1968), Harold Lindsell, “*The Battle for the Bible*” (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1976), Charles C. Ryrie, “*What You Should Know about Inerrancy*” (Moody Press: Chicago, IL, c.1982), etc.

<sup>4</sup> W.A. Criswell, “*Why I Preach that the Bible is Literally True*” (Broadman Press: Nashville, TN, 1969), pp. 44-45.

<sup>5</sup> Stewart Custer, “*Does Inspiration Demand Inerrancy?*” (The Craig Press: Nutley, NJ, 1968), p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> Harold Lindsell, “*The Battle for the Bible*” (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1976), p. 161.

Gleason Archer notes another **crucial, often overlooked fact**: “Whenever historical accounts of the bible are called into question on the basis of alleged disagreement with the findings of archaeology or the testimony of ancient non-Hebrew documents, always remember that **the Bible is itself an archaeological document of the highest caliber. It is simply crass bias for critics to hold that whenever a pagan record disagrees with the biblical account, it must be the Hebrew author that was in error. Pagan kings practiced self-laudatory propaganda, just as their modern counterparts do; and it is incredibly naïve to suppose that simply because a statement was written in Assyrian cuneiform or Egyptian hieroglyphics it was more trustworthy and factual than the Word of God composed in Hebrew. No other ancient document in the B.C. period affords so many clear proofs of accuracy and integrity as does the Old Testament; so it is a violation of the rules of evidence to assume that the Bible statement is wrong every time it disagrees with a secular inscription or manuscript of some sort. Of all the documents known to man, only the Hebrew-Greek Scriptures have certified their accuracy and divine authority by a pattern of prediction and fulfillment completely beyond the capabilities of man and possible only for God.”<sup>7</sup>**

**A Helpful General Observation by Ryrie: "Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching ...The dictionary defines inerrancy as 'being without error.'** Most definitions of inerrancy share that negative description. The question raised then by that definition is, *What is error?* Can the Bible use approximations and still be without error? Can a New Testament writer quote freely from the Old Testament and claim that the resultant quotation is without error? Can a biblical writer use the language of appearances without communicating error? Can there exist different accounts of the same event without involving error?

“Admittedly, the data of Scripture often includes approximations, free quotations, language of appearances, different accounts of the same occurrence. Can that data support a definition of inerrancy as 'being without error?'...**Perhaps the tension would be erased if we defined inerrancy positively--the inerrancy of the Bible means simply that the Bible tells the truth. Truth can and does include approximations, free quotations, language of appearances, and different accounts of the same event as long as those do not contradict.** e.g. "A friend with a \$100,000 income" [approximation]; "Sunrise over the Grand Canyon" [language of appearance or phenomenological language]; "Do not lie vs. Lie not one to another" [free quotation]; "At the changing of the guard a soldier fainted at Buckingham Palace (wife's report), when in reality the paper reports that 3 collapsed [true vs. precisely true]...

“If I Corinthians 10:8 says 23,000 died in one day and Numbers 25:9 records 24,000 but does not add the restriction 'in one day,' we understand both to be telling the truth (and probably both figures are approximations of the number that died in one day and the number of additional deaths later). If a New Testament writer makes a free quotation from the Old Testament, since he was writing under the inspiration of the Spirit, that free quotation becomes part of the inspired, inerrant text. The Holy Spirit, the author of both Old and New Testaments, certainly has the right to quote Himself as He wishes and to use quotations with meanings we as uninspired interpreters might never have seen...

"Using the language of appearances is a common way of communicating, sometimes even more vividly than scientific language could. If Mark and Luke speak of only one blind man, given sight at Jericho, whereas Matthew reports two, both statements are true as long as Mark and Luke do not say only one man... The Bible is inerrant in that it tells the truth, and it does so without error in all parts and with all its words."<sup>8</sup> **This was clearly the Lord Jesus' own view regarding Scripture (cf. Mt. 4:4; 5:17-18; 12:40; 22:29-32; 24:37; etc).**

#### **SOME SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS BY SKEPTICS... AND THEIR ANSWERS!**

- **“Bear ye one another’s burdens” vs. “Every man shall bear his own burden.” - Gal. 6:2 cf. v. 5.** Some claim that this is a definite error in the Bible, since the two statements appear to be contradictory, especially since they were written by the same writer in and occur in close proximity.

**Answer:** It’s very simple really. There are two different Greek words translated “burden” in the King James Version. One refers to an extremely large load, the “refrigerator sized” burden that a person needs help with (e.g. the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, a divorce, the facing of a terminal illness, etc). The other word means the small, hand-held “burden” that a person normally carries himself, much like a purse or computer bag. There is no contradiction. Believers should rally around those going through extreme difficulties and help them carry such loads. But individually we all need to shoulder the ordinary burdens of life that every person faces. Ryrie puts it succinctly: “[Gal.] 6:2: burdens. i.e., the excess burdens that we need to share with one another, in contrast to the ‘burden,’ or load (different Greek word), in verse 5, which means the normal amount each must carry for himself.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Gleason Archer, “*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*” (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1982), pp. 16-17.

<sup>8</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know About Inerrancy*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 1981, pp. 30-32

<sup>9</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, “*The Ryrie Study Bible (KJV)-Expanded Edition*” (Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 1994), p. 1780 [footnote].

- **“They heard the voice” vs. “They heard not the voice.” - Acts 9:7 cf. 22:9.** In a similar example to that above, the statements in these two verses appear to contradict each other. But the problem melts away with a little investigation.

**Answer:** Custer points out: “The natural interpretation of these two passages is that, just as the men with Paul saw the light, but did not see the Person of the Lord, so they heard the sound of His voice without understanding the words which He uttered.”<sup>10</sup> MacArthur concurs: “Since Jesus spoke only to Paul, only he understood the Lord’s words. His companions heard the sound, but could not make out the words (cf. John 12:28-29).”<sup>11</sup> In addition, this one is explainable by the two different verb tenses that are used. In Acts 9 where it says that they heard the voice of Jesus, it means to hear a sound or noise, such as to hear the rumble of thunder, or a person speaking in a foreign language that one does not understand. In chapter 22 however, the meaning is *to hear with comprehension and understanding*, which they clearly didn’t. Custer observes: “There is also a technical grammatical explanation in the nature of the Greek cases...In Acts 9:7 the men heard a ‘voice’ in the genitive case; this specifies a voice rather than a thunderclap, or some other sound. In 22:9 the men did not hear the voice in the accusative case; that is, they did not hear the content of the voice, namely the words uttered. A parallel to this is found in Acts 17:32 in which the Athenians ‘*heard the resurrection*’ (accusative); that is the content, the doctrine of the resurrection. Some of the group then said, ‘*We will hear thee* (genitive) *again*,’ specifying Paul without referring to content. They had heard enough about that doctrine. Thus the grammatical explanation simply confirms the logical one.”<sup>12</sup> There is no contradiction.

- **How did Judas die? – Mt. 27:3-10 cf. Acts 1:16-19.** The question here revolves around the fact that Matthew says that Judas “*hanged himself*” while Luke writing in Acts states that Judas fell on a rock and burst open.

**Answer:** Putting the two accounts together, the probable solution is quite simple: “1) Judas hurled the 30 tetradrachms [pieces of silver] to the priests in the temple. (Matt. 27:3). 2) He then went out and hanged himself (Matt. 27:5). 3) Either the rope or the branch broke; he fell upon a rock and received mortal wounds (Acts 1:18). 4) This bloody act was regarded as polluting the field (Acts 1:19). 5) The priests later used the 30 tetradrachms to buy the field to bury aliens in (Matt. 27:7). A notorious suicide is often regarded as too well known to require detailed explanations, and differing details should not be regarded as contradictory unless the facts cannot be reconciled.”<sup>13</sup>

- **Allegedly contradictory genealogies of Christ? – Mt. 1 vs. Lk. 3.** Atheist David Mills rants and raves about what he calls: “...*the fouled up genealogical records in Matthew, Chapter 1 and Luke, Chapter 3. [sic] Both of these genealogies claim to record the ancestral lineage from David to Jesus, yet the two lists present contradictory data. A skeptic might also ponder the question of why a child supposedly ‘born of a Virgin’ should be provided with two genealogies listing Joseph’s genetic heritage! ...Personally, I agree that all the biblical genealogies are unreliable.*”<sup>14</sup> Mills then goes on to include a contrasting list of the names in the two genealogies in Matthew and Luke.

**Answer:** The data does not contradict. The fact that the two lists contain different names is a well-known fact. It is also a very old issue which has been answered over and over again.<sup>15</sup> There are several plausible explanations that have been advanced. The most likely one is that Matthew is giving us Jesus’ lineage through Joseph’s line [i.e. the “royal” line of King David], while Luke is giving Jesus’ lineage through Mary’s line. Mills is wrong on several counts: a) we are not provided with two genealogies of Joseph, b) Joseph’s genetic heritage was not the issue [in fact it would have been disqualifying, due to Jeconiah, an earlier Old Testament king’s sin... c) which is the reason for Mary’s lineage being given in Luke, which gave Christ the right to reign on David’s throne]. Thomas & Gundry have written perhaps the most succinct yet thorough overview of this apparent problem, as well as the best answer to it.<sup>16</sup> In it they conclude: “*What we have then are two different genealogies of two people. Probably even the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel of Matthew and Luke are different persons. This view (covered in detail in their article) does not depend on conjecture, rests on evidence within the texts themselves, fits the purposes of the evangelists, and easily resolves the problem surrounding Jeconiah. Of this view L.M. Sweet appropriately wrote, ‘Its simplicity and felicitous adjustment to the whole complex situation is precisely its recommendation.’*”

<sup>10</sup> Custer, p. 109.

<sup>11</sup> John MacArthur, “*The MacArthur Study Bible* (NASB)” (Thomas Nelson: Nashville, TN, 2006), p. 1643 [footnote].

<sup>12</sup> Custer, p. 109.

<sup>13</sup> Custer, pp. 105-106.

<sup>14</sup> David Mills, “*Atheist Universe*” (Xlibris Corp, 2003), pp. 164-166, italics in the original.

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, “Robert L. Thomas & Stanley Gundry, “*A Harmony of the Gospels*” (Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 1978), pp. 313-319; A.T. Robertson, “*A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ*” (Harper & Brothers Publishers: New York, NY, 1922), pp. 259-262; J. Gresham Machen, “*The Virgin Birth of Christ*” (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1930), esp. pp. 188-209; Robert Gromacki, “*The Virgin Birth-Doctrine of Deity*” (Thomas Nelson, Inc: Nashville, TN 1974), pp. 150-159; Archer, p. 316; Custer, p. 104; etc.

<sup>16</sup> Robert L. Thomas & Stanley Gundry, “*A Harmony of the Gospels*” (HarperCollins Publishers: San Francisco, CA, 1978), pp. 313-319.

**Custer presents a similar summary:** “Matthew’s Gospel is intended for the Jewish reader and portrays the Lord Jesus Christ as the rightful King of the Jews. Logically, therefore, Matthew presents the royal genealogy through the kingly line to David, and on to Abraham. Although Matthew makes clear that Joseph was not the father of the Lord Jesus (1:18-25) Joseph was the husband of Mary, and thus the full legal title to the Davidic throne passed from Joseph to the Lord Jesus. Because God’s curse fell on king Jeconiah (Coniah) and his descendents, the Lord Jesus could not have actual physical descent from him (Jer. 22:24-30). In contrast, the Gospel of Luke is intended for Gentile readers and presents Christ as the Universal Man. Mary dominates the first chapters of Luke, and hence it is probable that the genealogy is hers. But it would not be customary to name a woman in a Jewish genealogy. Joseph, therefore, is listed as related to Heli; probably Joseph was his son-in-law. The word ‘son’ is not in the Greek text in these verses; in each case it is a genitive of relationship. The relationship can be that between son-in-law and father-in-law just as easily as it could be son to father.”<sup>17</sup>

- **Bad Mathematics? (The Molten Sea/Laver) - II Chronicles 4:2.** Atheist Sam Harris has audaciously commented: “A book written by an omniscient being could contain a chapter on mathematics that, after two thousand years of continuous use, would still be the richest source of mathematical insight humanity has ever known. Instead, the bible contains no formal discussion of mathematics and some obvious mathematical errors. In two places, for instance, the Good Book [sic] states that the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter is 3:1 (I Kings 7:23-26 and II Chronicles 4:2-5). As an approximation of the constant [pi] this is not impressive. The decimal expansion of [pi] runs to infinity—3.1415926535 ...the Egyptians and Babylonians both approximated [pi] to a few decimal places several centuries before the oldest books of the Bible were written. The Bible offers us an approximation that is terrible even by the standards of the ancient world. As should come as no surprise, the faithful have found ways of rationalizing this; but those rationalizations cannot conceal the obvious deficiency of the bible as a source of mathematical insight.”<sup>18</sup> [!]

**Answer:** Frankly, I am truly amazed that Harris has raised this issue. Dr. Harold Lindsell irrefutably answered this question several decades ago in his widely-circulated book, “*The Battle for the Bible*” (while responding to Dr. Robert Mounce). Apparently Harris and his buddies, like Mounce before them, didn’t even bother to do superficial research! The result is that they end up with egg on their face. If, as Harris asserts, II Chronicles 4:2 is an example of the “atrocious” mathematics contained in the Bible, then we should all be so fortunate with our math skills! Let me allow Dr. Lindsell to explain.

**Lindsell:** “Two and two make four, and they did in Solomon’s time, just as they do [today]. To say that two and two make five and then excuse it because it was said three thousand years ago in a different culture hardly makes good sense. How do we respond? ...First, let us agree that the people of that day may have been ignorant of that branch of mathematics called algebra. I am not saying this was so. I merely grant it for convenience’ sake. Thus they did not know about *pi* or its value. But...a cubit was a cubit was a cubit. It had a specific length. And any carpenter who wanted to lay out a cubit five times or ten times or a hundred times would have produced as accurate a measurement as any carpenter who has a yardstick in his possession is capable of doing today. I can only conclude that those who constructed the molten sea were capable of measuring what they had constructed. And they measured the diameter as well as the circumference. And what they recorded was absolutely accurate—not just a rough measurement. How could this have come about? A cubit is equal to eighteen inches. A handbreadth is equal to four inches. These are the significant data. Ten cubits equal 180 inches. Thirty cubits equals 540 inches. But we must remember that the wall of the molten sea was a handbreadth in thickness. This means that it was four inches wide from the exterior of the vessel to the interior where the liquid filled it. What happened was simple indeed. When the diameter was measured, the measurement was taken from the outside perimeter. And it was ten cubits or 180 inches. But when they used their measuring instrument for the circumference, they did not measure it from the outside but from the inside. It measured 30 cubits, or 540 inches. Now see what this does. If we allow for the eight inches for the two sides of the molten sea, it means that the diameter was 180 inches, less eight inches, or 172 inches. And when 172 is multiplied by 3.14 (the value of *pi*) the result is 540.08, **which is quite accurate. In other words, when diameter is measured the same way the circumference was measured, there is no discrepancy at all.** [The critics are] wrong and scripture is right. And we should expect that it would be, for they had adequate measuring instruments so that nothing was left to chance or to guesstimate.”<sup>19</sup>

- **The allegedly “erroneous” statements regarding Christ’s birth? – Luke 2:1-3.** Harris is obviously not the only atheist to open his mouth without thinking and stick his foot inside. Atheist Christopher Hitchens apparently desiring not to be outdone by Harris, exhibits a similarly embarrassing burst of intellectual inanity: “*The Gospel according to Luke states that the miraculous birth occurred in a year when the Emperor Caesar Augustus ordered a census for the purpose of taxation, and that this happened at a time when Herod reigned in Judaea and Quirinius was governor of Syria. That is the closest to a triangulation of historical dating that any biblical writer even attempts. But Herod died four years ‘BC,’ and during his*

<sup>17</sup> Custer, p. 104.

<sup>18</sup> Sam Harris, “*Letter to a Christian Nation*” (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, NY, 2006), pp. 60-61.

<sup>19</sup> Lindsell, pp. 165-166.

rulership the governor of Syria was not Quirinius. There is no mention of any Augustan census by any Roman historian, but the Jewish chronicler Josephus mentions one that did occur—without the onerous requirement for people to return to their places of birth, and six years after the birth of Jesus is supposed to have taken place. This is, all of it, quite evidently a garbled and oral-based reconstruction undertaken some considerable time after the ‘fact.’”<sup>20</sup>

**Answer:** It’s hard to believe Hitchens was ignorant enough to say all of that! Apparently he too failed to do any research at all. Either that, or he is reading extremely outdated books [& apparently his friends, reviewers and proofreaders are clueless as well?]. If he had made even a cursory examination he would realize that he had just crawled out onto a very long, termite-filled historical limb. But since he has, I will be more than happy to saw it off for him [cf. Titus 1:9b]. Nearly forty years ago Josh McDowell wrote several extremely popular apologetic books addressing such uninformed allegations, decisively refuting them using incontrovertible historical and archaeological evidence and information. Many other scholars before and after him have done so as well. So...would someone please wake Mr. Hitchens up and get him up to speed?

**McDowell explains:** “It was one time conceded that Luke had entirely missed the boat in the events he portrayed as surrounding the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-3). They argued that there was no census, that Quirinius was not governor of Syria at that time and that everyone did not have to return to his ancestral home. [Some things never change!] First of all, archaeological discoveries prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Romans had a regular enrollment of taxpayers and also held censuses every 14 years. This procedure was indeed begun under Augustus and the first took place in either 23-22 B.C. or in 9-8 B.C. The latter would be the one to which Luke refers. Secondly, we find evidence that Quirinius was governor of Syria around 7 B.C. This assumption is based on an inscription found in Antioch ascribing to Quirinius this post. As a result of this finding, it is now supposed that he was governor twice. Once in 7 B.C. and the other time in 6 A.D. (the date ascribed by Josephus). Lastly, in regard to the practices of enrollment, a papyrus found in Egypt gives directions for the conduct of a census. It reads: ‘Because of the approaching census it is necessary that all those residing for any cause away from their homes should at once prepare to return to their own governments in order that they may complete the family registration of the enrollment and that the tilled lands may retain those belonging to them.’”<sup>21</sup> Mr. Hitchens can you say, “*I have egg on my face*”?

- **Unicorns?** Atheist David Mills declares: “*The Great Pretenders also ignore completely many other biblical absurdities, such as the existence of unicorns...Job 39:9-10; Ps. 22:21; 29:6; 92:10; Num. 23:22; 24:8; Dt. 33:17 & Isa. 34:7.*”<sup>22</sup>

**Answer:** These next few examples are easily explained since they are simply archaic, inaccurate English translations of Hebrew words in the King James Version. Any intelligent person can confirm that by simply looking up such words in a good concordance. The Hebrew word is “*rem*” [reym], and means a wild bull or wild ox.<sup>23</sup> The New American Standard Version correctly translates the word as “**wild ox**” or “**wild oxen.**”

- **Witches?** Note Mills’ exaggerated statement: “*Exodus 22:18... Witches and wizards are also mentioned in 1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Kings 21:6; and Leviticus 19:31... Hundreds of thousands of innocent women—including female children as young as two years of age—were routinely tortured to death by devout believers obeying these biblical injunctions to take the life of any witch.*”<sup>24</sup>

**Answer:** My first comment to David Mills would be, “*David, I’ve told you a billion times not to exaggerate!*” ☺ While not endorsing the Salem Witch Trials, (The single famous witch trial in America), an impartial historical examination would demonstrate that a very small number of women were actually put to death there. “*Hundreds of thousands of innocent women*” is a huge exaggeration, even if Mills is speaking in worldwide terms over a period of a millennium or more. Furthermore, the term *kashaph* (kaw-shaf) can actually apply to men or women since it simply means “to whisper a spell, i.e. to enchant or practice magic:--sorcerer, (use) witch (-craft).”<sup>25</sup> As far as witchcraft itself is concerned, God condemns witchcraft, Satan worship, etc, in both the Old & New Testaments. That is still His attitude about it today and should be any Christian’s as well, without apology. However Christians are obviously not running around killing Satanists, witches, etc. Believers live in the New Testament “age of grace” and so we leave punishment for such sinful behavior in God’s hands (Rom. 12:19). Instead we seek to free such individuals from the shackles of that evil through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

<sup>20</sup> Hitchens, op cit., p. 112.

<sup>21</sup> Josh McDowell, “*Evidence that Demands a Verdict*” (Campus Crusade for Christ: San Bernardino, CA, 1972), p. 73, citing John Elder, “*Prophets, Idols and Diggers*” (Bobbs-Merrill: New York, NY, 1960) & Joseph Free, “*Archaeology and Bible History*” (Scripture Press Publications: Wheaton, IL, 1969). Cf.

<sup>22</sup> Mills, op cit., pp. 168-169.

<sup>23</sup> James Strong, “*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*” (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press: Nashville, TN, 1890, 1953), *Hebrew & Chaldee Dictionary*, p. 106: “*a wild bull... (from its conspicuousness).*”

<sup>24</sup> Mills, p. 169.

<sup>25</sup> Strong, *Hebrew & Chaldee Dictionary*, p. 58.

- **Dragons?** Atheist Mills once again: “*Isaiah 34:13...Psalm 91:13...The mythical dragon is described as a reality in over a dozen additional Bible verses, including Psalm 74:13; Deuteronomy 32:33 and Micah 1:8.*”<sup>26</sup>

**Answer:** As with the term “unicorn” and the other words below, a simple check of the Hebrew reveals that these words are simply poor translations of the Hebrew words.<sup>27</sup> The New American Standard Version usually translates this word as “*jackal*” or “*serpent*.” As with the other words here, anyone who will take the time to look the words up can discover these things for themselves. Apparently Mills was not willing to do so. Or perhaps he knows that these are bogus arguments but presumes that most readers know nothing about the Bible and will not bother to check things out for themselves. I say that because Mills apparently *knows* these terms are simply poor old English translations since in his book he suddenly becomes a diehard advocate for the King James Version, feigning concern that anyone would dare change the KJV’s wording. [How hilarious & hypocritical for an atheist to demand that no one change even a word of the KJV, while on the other hand admitting that more modern translations correct these poorly translated words].<sup>28</sup>

- **Cockatrice?** Mills again: “*The Bible contains innumerable other references to fanciful creatures, such as the Cockatrice—a serpent hatched from the egg of a cock whose mere glance could kill its enemies.*”<sup>29</sup> [Where in the world he got that idea from I would not know. It certainly wasn’t from the Bible!]

**Answer:** The meaning of the word is “*Adder...to extrude, as thrusting out the tongue i.e. hissing*”<sup>30</sup> i.e. a serpent/snake. Is it too much to ask Mills to make at least a minimal attempt at checking his facts?

- **Satyrs?** Mills, once more: “[and] *Satyrs—creatures that were half man, half goat or horse (Isaiah 13:21).*”<sup>31</sup>

**Answer:** In reality the Hebrew word means “*shaggy; a he-goat, faun, goat, hairy, kid, rough.*”<sup>32</sup> The New American Standard Bible accurately translates it “*shaggy goats.*” If Mr. Mills would simply come down to the West Indies island country of St. Vincent where we live, I would be more than happy to show him all the “*satyrs*” i.e. *goats*—shaggy or otherwise—that he will ever care to see, since we have hundreds of them all over the island!

- **Fiery serpents and flying serpents?** Mills yet again: “*The Bible contains innumerable [sic] other references to fanciful creatures such as...Fiery serpents (Deuteronomy 8:15); and Flying serpents (Isaiah 30:6 [& 14:29]).*”<sup>33</sup>

**Answer:** A combination of two words, the one translated “*flying*,” is elsewhere translated “*fiery*” (e.g. Dt. 8:15) and has the meaning of “*to cover with wings (or obscurity)...*” while the second means “*burning, i.e. (figuratively a) poisonous (serpent); specifically a seraph or symbolic creature (from their copper color):-fiery (serpent), seraph...*”<sup>34</sup> The words are obviously used figuratively, to portray grave danger i.e. copper-colored serpents waiting to strike and bite, *not* some absurdity such as snakes with wings. Unger helpfully comments: “The serpents of Egypt, Sinai, and the Holy Land are numerous...The English names of snakes mentioned are ‘adder,’ ‘arrowsnake,’ ‘asp,’ ‘basilisk’ (fictitious), ‘cockatrice’ (fictitious), ‘fiery flying serpent,’ ‘viper,’ and the generic term ‘serpent.’ Besides these the following terms are used: ‘crooked,’ ‘crossing like a bar,’ ‘fleeing,’ ‘gliding,’ ‘piercing,’ ‘swift,’ ‘winding,’ as adjectives to the serpent...Almost all the allusions to the serpent in the Scriptures are to its malignity and venom. Probably the Hebrews regarded most or all snakes as poisonous.”<sup>35</sup>

- “*The loving Jesus*” vs. “*The biblical Jesus*”? - **Lk. 19:27.** Atheist Mills’ zeal to seize upon anything that even remotely looks like a biblical contradiction causes him to really stick his foot in his mouth with the following statement: “*There is a pronounced dissimilarity between the popularized ‘loving’ version of Jesus we hear about in church and the Jesus as actually quoted in the New Testament. For example, in Luke 19:27, Jesus said, ‘But those mine enemies, which would not that I*

<sup>26</sup> Mills, *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> “*Tanniyn* (tan-noon), from *Tan*; from an unused root prob. Meaning to elongate; a monster...i.e. a sea serpent (or other huge sea animal); also a jackal (or other hideous land animal)...a marine or land monster, i.e. sea-serpent or jackal...whale.” Strong, *Hebrew & Chaldee Dictionary*, p. 125.

<sup>28</sup> Mills: “*I also find it revealing that, in the newer, modern-language translations of the bible, these ridiculous passages of Scripture have been dishonestly excised, rewritten, or edited beyond recognition [sic] from their original translation in the King James.*” (*ibid.*, p. 170). What a joke for Mills to feign deep concern that someone would dare tamper with the KJV, when in reality he rejects the Bible—*ANY* bible, including the King James Version—out of hand! As one of Shakespeare’s characters famously stated: “*Metinks thou doth protest too much!*” ©

<sup>29</sup> Mills, p. 169.

<sup>30</sup> Strong, *Hebrew & Chaldee Dictionary*, p.101.

<sup>31</sup> Mills, p. 169.

<sup>32</sup> “*Saiyr* (saw-eer’); or sa’ir...from 8175; shaggy; as noun, a he-goat; by analogy a fawn...” Strong, *Heb. & Chal. Dict.*, p.119.

<sup>33</sup> Mills, p. 169.

<sup>34</sup> Strong, *Hebrew & Chaldee Dictionary*, pp. 86 & 121.

<sup>35</sup> Merrill F. Unger (R.K. Harrison, editor, Howard F. Vos & Cyril J. Barber, contributing editors) “*The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*” (Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 1988 revised edition), p. 77.

*should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.’ Those were the ‘loving’ words of Jesus Himself. No wonder His followers are so intolerant. They are only following Jesus’ declarations that anyone who disagrees with their religious beliefs deserves death and eternal incineration.”<sup>36</sup>*

**Answer:** Mills makes an incredible faux pas here. Apparently he was so eager to try and find something that he could call an error, and so careless in reading the passage, that he failed to notice that these are *not* Jesus’ words or commands to his followers at all! Instead it’s a parable that Jesus was telling [The parable of the “Pounds”]. The person in the parable speaking the words quoted by Mills is actually the ruler described in the parable!

- **Jeremiah supposedly quoted, when it was actually from Zechariah – Mt. 27:9-10.** Harris alleges: “*And the evangelists made other errors of scholarship. Matthew 27:9-10 for instance, claims to fulfill a saying that it attributes to Jeremiah. The saying actually appears in Zechariah 11:12-13.*”<sup>37</sup>

**Answer:** As has been pointed out by many Bible scholars, the Old Testament was divided by the Jews into three sections called “*The Law, the Writings & the Prophets*.” The section called “*The Prophets*” began with the book of Jeremiah, thus to say “*As Jeremiah says*” was often tantamount to saying, “*As the prophets say*.” Zechariah was, of course one of those prophets.

**MacArthur explains it succinctly:** “Actually the statement [in Mt. 27] paraphrases Zech. 11:12-13. But the Hebrew canon was divided into 3 sections, Law, Writings, and Prophets (cf. Lk. 24:44). Jeremiah came first in the order of prophetic books, so the Prophets were sometimes collectively referred to by his name.”<sup>38</sup>

- **The blind men at Jericho. – Mark 10:46-52 & Luke 18:35-43 cf. Matthew 20:29-34.** (i.e. *1 man*, Bartimaeus, healed as Jesus *entered* Jericho vs. *2 men* healed, as Jesus was *leaving* Jericho).

**Answer:** “The difficulties are fairly simple to reconcile: there were two blind men, but Bartimaeus (Mk. 10:46) was the spokesman of the two and was, therefore, the sole focus of both Luke’s and Mark’s accounts. It is also a fact that there were two Jericho’s—one the mound of the ancient city (the ruins of which may still be seen today), and the other, the inhabited city of Jericho, close by. Jesus may have been going out of old Jericho and entering new Jericho. Or it may also be that the events are telescoped for us, so that Christ first encountered the blind men on His way into the city, but the healing took place as He was departing.”<sup>39</sup>

- **Should the term “*virgin*” be translated “*young woman*?” - Isaiah 7:14.** Liberals and skeptics for a couple centuries have claimed that the virgin birth taught in the Old Testament, is an invention, added in New Testament times, in order to support the [supposedly invented] idea that Jesus was God. Atheist Sam Harris: “*The Hebrew text of Isaiah uses the word ‘alma,’ however, which simply means ‘young woman,’ without any implication of virginity. It seems all but certain that the dogma of the virgin birth, and much of the Christian world’s resulting anxiety about sex, was a product of a mistranslation from the Hebrew.*”<sup>40</sup>

**Answer:** This is simply wrong. A careful examination of the other eight occurrences of the word “*almah*” in the Old Testament will reveal that on all of the other occasions it meant “*virgin*.” Furthermore, Matthew in his gospel (1:23) quotes this Isaiah 7:14 passage and in doing so gives us an inspired translation, using a Greek word that clearly & unquestionably means virgin (Gk: *Parthenos*). Finally, Harris’ snide remark about the Christian world’s supposed “*anxiety about sex*” is ludicrous. In fact the Bible and biblical Christianity maintains a very healthy, positive, balanced view of the physical aspects of marriage [see, for example Gen. 2:23-24; Prov. 5:18-19; Song of Solomon (the entire book); I Cor. 7:1-6; Heb. 13:4; etc]. In reality, the anxiety and hang-ups are in Harris and his fellow atheists’ minds, as has been documented by Dinesh D’Souza in his book refuting atheism.<sup>41</sup>

- **The mustard seed – Mt. 13:31-32.** – Archer explains the supposed difficulty: “In Matthew 13:31-32 Jesus describes the mustard seed (*kokkos sinapeos*) as being ‘smaller than all the seeds.’ The question arises as to whether this statement could be supported by a knowledgeable botanist, or did Christ make a mistake in His rating of the comparative size of the mustard seed?”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Mills, p. 50.

<sup>37</sup> Harris, p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> John MacArthur, editor, “*The MacArthur Study Bible*” (NASV) (Thomas Nelson: Nashville, TN, 2006), p. 1415.

<sup>39</sup> MacArthur, p. 1398.

<sup>40</sup> Harris, p. 58.

<sup>41</sup> See “*What’s so great about Christianity?*”, pp. 262-267.

<sup>42</sup> Archer, p. 329.

**Answer:** “In all probability. He was referring to the black mustard...J.C. Trever suggests that the orchid seed is even smaller than the seed of the black mustard. But it is highly questionable whether Jesus was discussing all plant life on planet Earth when He made this statement. No one yet has proved that ancient Palestinians planted anything that bore a smaller seed than that of the black mustard, and that was the framework within which Jesus was speaking. There is no record of the orchid every being cultivated in Palestine.”<sup>43</sup>

- **The inscription on Jesus’ cross.** – **Mt. 27:37; Mk. 15:26; Lk. 23:38; Jn. 19:19.** Custer describes the alleged discrepancy: “Although each of the four Gospel writers record the inscription on the cross, none of them give it with the same words.”

**Answer:** “But the writers were not under obligation to quote all [of] the inscription. Perhaps the full inscription read, ‘*This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.*’ Each Evangelist then quoted part of the inscription...we must also remember that the inscription was written in three different languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. The variations may well have been original in the different languages; one Evangelist quoting from one language, and another translating from another. There is certainly no necessity of assuming that slight variations must be irreconcilable contradictions.”<sup>44</sup>

- **Were the wars & exterminations in the Old Testament evil and unjustifiable?**<sup>45</sup> An old question that has often been asked is, “***If God is all powerful and all loving, how could He, throughout the Old Testament, order the wholesale extermination of entire people groups, including women and children?***” This question has recently returned to the “*front burner*,” in part because of recent books written by several high-profile atheists attacking Christianity. Here’s a small sampling of their caustic comments: “*The Bible—both Old and New Testaments—is filled with instances in which God, in various incarnations, supposedly orders people and armies to be murdered or to commit murder*”<sup>46</sup> “...one mutters a few sympathetic words for the forgotten and obliterated Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites, also presumably part of the Lord’s original creation, who are to be pitilessly driven out of their homes to make room for the ungrateful and mutinous children of Israel...*The Bible may, indeed does, contain a warrant for trafficking in humans, for ethnic cleansing...because it was put together by crude, uncultured human mammals...(God) addresses his generals after a battle and rages at them for sparing so many civilians...and the ground is forever soaked with the blood of the innocent.*”<sup>47</sup> “*Having promised to drive out of their homelands the unfortunate Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites...The ethnic cleansing begun in the time of Moses is brought to bloody fruition in the book of Joshua, a text remarkable for the bloodthirsty massacres it records and the xenophobic relish with which it does so.*”<sup>48</sup> “...*obscene celebrations of violence that we find throughout the Old and new Testaments...*”<sup>49</sup>

**Answer:** Several books answering these atheistic diatribes are now available,<sup>50</sup> so here I would like to simply reproduce the headings and a few brief paragraphs from an eight page paper that I’ve compiled to answer this question. (If you would like the full notes, please email me at: mikedebbie\_edwards@earthlink.net).

#### **Key Observations:**

- **There are not two different conceptions of God in the Bible i.e. an OT God of wrath & vengeance & a NT God of love.** The Old Testament actually contains more about the compassion and mercy of God than the New Testament. Furthermore, the New Testament says a great deal about God and His wrath. Bottom line: The God of the OT is the God of the NT!

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Custer, p. 106.

<sup>45</sup> That full paper (from which these extracts are taken) was compiled by Rev. Mike Edwards, Baptist Bible College of the Caribbean, P.O. Box 127, St. Vincent, West Indies, December 2007. All material in parentheses ( ) within quoted material is in parentheses in the original; anything in brackets [ ] is by me, as is the bolding & much of the italicizing. -mwe

<sup>46</sup> Mills, p. 35.

<sup>47</sup> Hitchens, pp. 101, 102, 106, 107.

<sup>48</sup> Dawkins, pp. 246, 247.

<sup>49</sup> Harris, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> e.g. Dinesh D’Souza “*What’s So Great About Christianity?*” (Regnery Publishing: Washington, DC, 2007); David Berlinski “*The Devil’s Delusion – Atheism and its Scientific Pretensions*” ((Basic Books: New York, NY, 2009); Antony Flew & Roy Abraham Varghese, “*There is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed his Mind*” (HarperOne: New York, NY, 2007) [Important note: Flew has only moved as far as Deism, not Theism, but after 20 years of examining the evidence has concluded that there definitely is a God-mwe]; Scott Hahn & Benjamin Wiker “*Answering the New Atheism*” Emmaus Road Publishing: Steubenville, OH, 2008); Alister E. McGrath & Joanna Collicutt McGrath, “*The Dawkins Delusion? - Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of Design*” (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, Illinois, 2007). Note: D’Souza’s book while generally very good, is badly off the mark in assuming that evolutionary theory is credible and pooh-poohing highly credentialed “*Intelligent Design*” advocates such as William Dembski, Philip Johnson, Michael Behe, Stephen Meyer, etc).



- **The destruction of the Canaanite peoples in the Old Testament was initiated by God, not the Israelites.** I point this out to debunk those who assert that the destruction of the Canaanites by the Israelites was due to the fact that the Hebrews were a barbaric, blood-thirsty people [see quotes at start of this section]. Such an assertion is totally baseless.
- **The wars and killing in the Old Testament were limited in scope, in regard to both time and demographics.** The impression that the Israelites were given “*Carte Blanche*” to kill anyone and everyone that they felt like going after, or that they engaged in the wholesale slaughter of people groups for centuries, is simply false. Apart from the Amalekite destruction during the time of King Saul (I Sam. 15), the battles and exterminations were limited to *the retaking of the land that had been previously given to Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob, and occupied by them hundreds of years earlier*. So in actuality, the actions described in Joshua, and to a lesser extent Judges, was mainly a reclaiming of land previously occupied by the children of Israel, from various Canaanite groups. Furthermore, it should also be pointed out that the Jews did not even complete the limited exterminations that they were commanded to carry out by Jehovah (see below for a fuller discussion). In addition...
- **The Canaanites were *incredibly* wicked and degenerate.** “The subsequent history of Israel serves to illustrate very pointedly the grave danger that remained for Israel so long as the Canaanites were permitted to live in their midst. Given over as they were to the most degenerate forms of polytheism and sexual impurity, these depraved inhabitants of the land were sure to exert a baneful influence and spread a deadly contagion among the covenant people of God. Recent archaeological discovery has brought to light concrete testimony to the crass and brutal features of the Canaanite faith as displayed in the literature of the Ras Shamra Tablets. Throughout the region there seems to have been a readiness to incorporate into the indigenous worship all the foreign cults that were practiced by the surrounding heathen nations. Thus we find a series of hyphenated gods: *Teshub-Hepa* (the Hurrian storm-god and his consort), the *Osiris-Isis* cult from Egypt; *Shamash* (the sun-god) and *Ishtar* (the bloodthirsty goddess of war and love) and *Tammuz* (a fertility god) from Mesopotamia. Many sites have yielded serpent stelae and Ashtoreth images with sexual symbols. In view of the corrupting influence of the Canaanite religion, especially with its religious prostitution the abomination of Baal-peor (as in Num. 25) and infant sacrifice, it was impossible for pure faith and worship to be maintained in Israel except by the complete elimination of the Canaanites themselves, at least in those areas which the Hebrews were able to occupy.”<sup>51</sup>
- **An often overlooked observation: The Israelites *didn’t even exterminate the groups they were commanded to (!)...with extremely negative long-lasting consequences.*** “...The Verdict of History (demonstrates that)...The Israelites, sickened by slaughter or seduced by sensual religious rites, ceased exterminating Canaanites, and Canaanite religious practices gradually pervaded Israelite religion. The punishment this brought upon Israel was terrible. Yahweh inflicted on them foreign oppression, invasion, destruction of Israelite cities, and the destruction of Jerusalem and exile from the Promised Land. To repeat, ***Yahweh did not order the Israelites to exterminate all Gentiles but only the Canaanites.*** This policy was not a permanent or eternal principle. It was intended for an immediate situation, when the Israelites were occupying the land God had promised their fathers. Later, the moral and ethical teachings of prophets such as Amos, Micah, and Isaiah would be presented just as stridently to Israel as the word of Yahweh. Still later, Jesus Christ would claim that he came to fulfill the law and prophets. The ‘*devotion*’ of the Canaanites in the land must be seen against all these factors...”<sup>52</sup>  
Much of the periodic spiritual decline and apostasy which marked the history of Israel during the time of the Judges is attributable to a toleration of the Canaanite inhabitants and their degenerate religion in the midst of the land.”<sup>53</sup>
- **While the Canaanite punishment *was* due to their gross sin, that is not to necessarily imply that the people of Israel enjoyed vast moral superiority.** Ultimately God commanded this because He had given those nations, in several cases, *centuries* to repent, and they had refused to do so. So in His providence, God had had enough, and determined that it was time to bring judgment. One need only read the Old Testament record to realize that the Israelites had some major moral problems of their own—some of them due to failing to totally exterminate the Canaanites, instead picking up their evil habits and practices. That being said, it must still be recognized that... “God would not have destroyed certain nations except that He is a God of justice and their evil could not go unchecked and condoned. He did intend and desire to punish them as a part of His plan, in consistency with His holy nature and jealousy for His wayfaring people. What He desires in consistency with His pure character, He does in justice, in their case, providing they have not repented and come into harmony with His nature (Jeremiah 18).”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Archer, pp. 297-299.

<sup>52</sup> LaSor, et al., pp. 147-149.

<sup>53</sup> Archer, p. 299.

<sup>54</sup> McDowell & Stewart, p. 69.

- “So if the Israelites were sinners too, why then were the Canaanites singled out for such severe treatment?” **Answer:** They were cut off to prevent Israel and the rest of the world from being similarly corrupted (Deut. 20:16-18). “*When a people starts to burn their children in honor of their gods (Lev. 18:21), practice sodomy, bestiality, and all sorts of loathsome vices (Lev. 18:23-24; 20:3), the land itself begins to ‘vomit’ them out as the body heaves under the load of internal poisons (Lev. 18:25, 27-30). Thus, ‘objection to the fate of these nations... is really an objection to the highest manifestation of the grace of God.’* Greene likens this action on God’s part, not to doing evil that good may come, but doing good in spite of certain evil consequences, just as a surgeon does not refrain from amputating a gangrenous limb even though in so doing he cannot help cutting off much healthy flesh.”<sup>55</sup>
- One final, **CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT** point in regard to the question of the “fairness” of those wars and exterminations...

**THE PEOPLE SLATED for DEATH and DESTRUCTION were given ABUNDANT OPPORTUNITY to REPENT& AVERT GOD’S JUDGMENT!**

“One more observation must be made here. Every forecast or prophecy of doom, like any prophetic word about the future except those few promises connected with the Noahic, Abrahamic, Davidic, and new covenants (which were unconditional and dependant solely on God’s work of fulfillment), had a suppressed ‘*unless*’ attached to them. At what moment that nation turns from its evil way and repents then at that time the Lord would relent and cease to bring the threatened harm (Jer. 18:7-10). **Thus Canaan had, as it were, a final forty-year countdown** as they heard of the events in Egypt, at the crossing of the Reed Sea, and what happened to the kings who opposed Israel along the way. **We know they were aware of such events, for Rahab confessed that these same events had terrorized her city of Jericho and that she, as a result, had placed her faith in the God of the Hebrews (Josh. 2:10-14).** Thus God waited for the ‘*cup of iniquity*’ to fill up—and fill up it did without any signs of change in spite of the marvelous signs given so that the nations, along with Pharaoh and the Egyptians, ‘*might know that He was the Lord.*’ **The destruction of the Canaanites was on the same principle as the whole world was judged (except for eight persons) in the Deluge, or the five cities of the plain (including Sodom and Gomorrah), or Pharaoh’s army.** Usually those who object to these events are those who deny any compatibility of the doctrine of eternal destruction of the unrepentant wicked with the mercy and love of God.”<sup>56</sup>

“In the case of the Amorites, God gave them **HUNDREDS OF YEARS TO REPENT**, yet they did not (Genesis 15:16). **Noah preached 120 years to his generation before the great flood** (Genesis 6:3). The proper Old Testament picture is one of a very patient God who gives these people untold opportunities to repent and come into harmony with Him, and only when they continually refuse does He judge and punish them for their evil deeds.”<sup>57</sup>

**In regard to the Amalekites, who are the one group God commanded to be killed later, chronologically speaking, Stone observes:** “Amalek was the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12). Thus they were the direct descendants of Isaac. Yet they became the persistent and hereditary enemies of Israel, a thorn in the flesh, and a constant menace to their spiritual and national life. Balaam calls them ‘*the first of the nations*’ (Num. 24:20), that is, to oppose Israel. They were a numerous and powerful people. It might have been expected that, as closely related to Israel as they were, that they would have afforded help instead of opposition. Yet they opposed Israel in a most mean and cowardly way. Years later Moses calls upon Israel to ‘*remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way as ye came forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God*’ (Deut. 25:17-18)...**Centuries later Samuel came to King Saul with a commission from Jehovah to utterly destroy the Amalekites with all their possessions so that not a trace of them or their should remain (I Sam. 15:3).** The failure of King Saul to carry out the command to destroy Amalek (I Sam. 15:2-3) led to his own rejection and death (I Sam. 15:26-28). When he lay mortally wounded on the battlefield of Mount Gilboa, a young man, a stranger, came to him. Saul urgently requested this young man to put an end to him for he knew he could not live (II Sam. 1:1-16). **By the bitter irony of a just retribution, this young man was an Amalekite. The sinful thing which Saul had spared now returned to slay him.** Not until the days of King Hezekiah was the command finally carried out (I Chron. 4:43)...This is no doubt one reason why Hezekiah was so favored by Jehovah... (The Amalekites) had first carried on a sort of guerrilla campaign against Israel. Then apparently they came out against them in open, pitched battle. (e.g. Joshua’s battle with Moses raising his rod)...”<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Kaiser, pp. 267-268.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, pp. 268-269.

<sup>57</sup> McDowell & Stewart, p. 70.

<sup>58</sup> Nathan Stone, “Names of God” (Moody Press: Chicago, Illinois, 1944), pp. 83-85.