

# **“There Is No Compelling Reason to Accept the Books of the Bible as Special”**

I have some comments and questions regarding [your article on the church canon](#)—in particular, the last paragraph. You state that:

**“We show that it is true to unbelievers by demonstrating that it is systematically consistent.”**

However, there are numerous inconsistencies throughout the bible—in both the old and new testaments—and in particular throughout the gospels and the accounts of the life and death of Jesus—as most non-believers can readily point out. While the inconsistencies as a whole do not negate the viability of the scripture, it does indicate that the canon as it stands is NOT systematically consistent.

You also state that:

**“We make belief possible by using both historical evidence and philosophical tools.”**

Philosophical, yes—but historical, no. Archeological and historical research has done as much to prove as disprove the scripture—at best a 50-50 balance.

And you also state:

**“Once individuals refuse to accept the claim of inspiration that the Bible makes for itself, they are left with a set of ethics without a foundation.”**

True—however, it is not sufficient to take the word of one source in regards to origin or inspiration. In other words, just because one book of the bible (a collection of documents written at very different times and by very different authors) says so isn't sufficient to make it so for the whole. At the time that portion of the bible was written, the whole did not yet exist and the reference to inspiration could only be referring to the work in which it appears.

If that is the argument—then there is no need for philosophical or historical tools to aid in believe. You cannot “have your cake and eat it too” in this case—either use science (history, etc.) to prove the reliability and uniqueness of the canon or base it on faith—one or the other, not both.

It seems to me—that despite an otherwise well researched and argued explanation of the canonization of the current bible there still is no compelling reason for the current books of the bible to be held in any higher esteem than those of the apocrypha or the writings of early church fathers.

Thank you for the thoughtful response to my essay on the canonization of the Bible. Let me briefly respond to some of your points.

*However, there are numerous inconsistencies throughout the bible in both the old and new testaments—and in particular throughout the gospels and the accounts of the life and death of Jesus as most non-believers can readily point out. While the inconsistencies as a whole do not negate the viability of the scripture, it does indicate that the canon as it stands is NOT systematically consistent.*

The question of consistency regarding the Gospels has been hotly contested. Perhaps the problem partly lies in defining what we mean by consistency. No one denies that the writers were attempting to give different perspectives regarding the events and ministry of Jesus. My view and the view of conservative theologians is that the teachings of the four Gospels are consistent even though individual details might differ. Where some see inconsistency and conflict, others see different perspectives of a single or similar event. The Gospels were not written as a history text or as a biographical work in the modern sense, to hold these texts to this kind of standard would be placing unwarranted restrictions on the writings.

*Archeological and historical research has done as much to prove as disprove the scripture at best a 50-50 balance.*

The role of archaeology and historical evidence in affirming the NT writings is also a complex one. You seem to be arguing that if one places their faith in the teachings of the NT they cannot use historical and archaeological evidence to defend the texts in any manner. While I would agree that neither archaeological nor historical evidence can prove that the teachings of the Bible are theologically true, they can affirm a number of things about the nature of the texts. First, they give us expanding knowledge of the geographical setting of the events that are described. Second, they help us to understand the religious milieu of the time (ex. Nag Hammadi findings). Third, they constrain the attempts of some to mythologize the NT. The discoveries of the Well of Jacob, the Pool of Siloam, the probable location of the Pool of Bethesda, and the name of Pilate himself on a stone in the Roman theater at Caesarea lend historical credibility to the NT text. Certainly the reliability of the NT writings can benefit from positive archaeological and historical evidence.

*At the time that portion of the bible was written, the whole did not yet exist and the reference to inspiration could only be referring to the work in which it appears.*

The high regard that the church Fathers had for the OT writings did not transfer to the NT texts until the church was forced to respond to threatening issues. Since some had been disciples of Apostles, the urgency to define the canon was not intense. Once given the need to do so in the second and third centuries, believers held to those writings that affirmed the tradition that had been handed down from the beginning. The place given to the Apocrypha by the early church is another issue which I address in [my essay](#) on those writings.

Thanks again for your comments.

Sincerely,

## **“What About Those Who Have Not Heard?”**

### **What happens to those who have not heard about Jesus and therefore cannot choose or reject Him?**

The Bible does not give a complete answer to the question. But there are certain principles that are contained in the Bible; so, although we may not be totally dogmatic on this subject, neither can we say that we must be agnostic toward it. There is sufficient information given so that we can gain a good perspective on it.

First, God never intended anyone to be out of fellowship with Him. Heaven was intended to be man's destination. God is holy and loving and wants everyone to repent (Exod. 34:6-7; Jonah 4:10-11; 2 Peter 3:9). Though He is a just and righteous God, He's also a loving God.

Second, God's nature prevents Him from being unfair. The Bible teaches that God judges fairly (Gen. 18:25; Psalm 7:11, 9:18; 1 Peter 1:17). In His infinite justice, He will be much fairer than we, with our limited understanding of justice, could possibly be.

Third, man is not in total ignorance or spiritual darkness. The Bible clearly teaches that man has an awareness both of God and of eternity (Psalm 19:1-4; Eccl. 3:11; John 1:9; Acts 14:15-17; Rom. 1:18-21, 2:15). It was the Roman sage Seneca who said, "God is near you, is with you. A sacred Spirit dwells within us, the Observer and Guardian of all our evil and all our good. There is no good man without God." [Quoted in J. Oswald Sanders, *How Lost Are the Heathen?* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 53.]

However, this God-consciousness is not enough. Man must have more information than this in order to be saved. The Christian message is in jeopardy at either extreme. If God-consciousness is sufficient for salvation, then the Bible's revelation is unnecessary. This is wrong because the Bible places such an importance in bringing the message of Jesus Christ to those who have not heard (Rom. 10:14). But if the Bible is the only way a person can be saved, then we are back to our initial question about those who haven't heard.

In these cases, we have a fourth principle: God will provide the necessary information to those who seek Him. God rewards those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6). He will give anyone who earnestly seeks Him enough information to make a decision (1 Chron. 15:2; Psalm 9:10; Prov. 8:17; Jer. 29:13; Acts 8:30-31). God sent Peter to a Roman official named Cornelius to tell him about Jesus (Acts 10). It is also possible that God may work faith in a person's heart so that, like Job, he may say, "I know that my Redeemer lives," without knowing the identity of the Redeemer.

Fifth, the responsibility for a decision concerning this information belongs to each one of us. We are ultimately responsible for the course we choose. No one can make the decision for us. As C.W. Hale Amos wrote, "From what we know, respecting the terms of salvation, we are led irresistibly to the conclusion that no man can perish except by his own fault and deliberate choice." [Ibid., 54.]

We do not have a complete answer to this question. The above principles indicate that God wants all

of us to repent, that He is a fair judge, that He will give all of us enough information, and that we are responsible for the decision we make based on that information.

But there is not a totally clear picture about what happens to those who have not heard. This should give us all the more reason to make sure, if we are Christians, that we do what we can to share the Good News with all people or, if we are not Christians, we make a decision for Jesus Christ today. If we are not completely sure that we are believers, we should make sure by a conscious decision. As C.S. Lewis said in *Mere Christianity*, "If you are worried about the people outside [of Christianity], the most unreasonable thing you can do is to remain outside yourself." [C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (NY: Macmillan, 1972), 50.]

Kerby Anderson  
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See answers by  
[Sue Bohlin](#)  
and [GotQuestions.org](#)

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## **[“Aren’t All Religions Man-Made?”](#)**

**Let me get this straight: your view is that “man-made religions lead to spiritual death and only one [i.e., yours] leads to life.” Aren’t all religions man-made? Without man, there is no religion, because religion is a man-made concept. Animals have no concept of Deity, or anything beyond their own survival, so it cannot be a “God-given” concept innate to all creatures; otherwise, the creatures of the wild would spend more time worshipping and less time surviving. Thus, we have proved religion is a concept restricted only to mankind. Man has been interested in this concept for about the last 12,000 years. This interest was sparked when the hunter-gatherer societies (concerned with survival only) evolved into agricultural societies. They saw the existence of a power greater than themselves which made the crops grow and the rains fall. If we look to the first man-made interpretations of Deity, most of which were female, they date from about the 7,000 BC on. If all the concepts of Deity and religion from 7,000 BC to the birth of Christ were man-made religions, then Christianity is one in an ongoing series of man-made religions. Which brings me back to my original point, being that since religion was created by man to bring him into contact with That which was Greater than himself, all of the world’s religions, from the oldest to the newest, are ALL man-made, including Christianity. And if man-made religions lead to spiritual death... how can any one religion claim to offer the only way to life, especially one so young in the overall history of religion? May God bless you with a history lesson.**

**Peace.**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Our view is that Christianity leads to life because it is about Jesus Christ, who defined Himself as life. All religions are not man-made because Christianity (with its roots in Judaism) comes *from* God *to* man. God communicated with people through His written word (the Bible) and by sending His son Jesus from heaven. In other words, He pierced our space-time continuum and communicated with us.

All other religions are man's way of attempting to find God. Christianity is God reaching US.

The evidence for this is that the Bible is the only holy book that includes true prophecy, history written in advance, because an all-knowing God knew what would happen in the future and made sure it was written down before it happened. More evidence for this is that when Jesus came to earth, He claimed to be God and said He would be crucified and come back to life three days later, which He did.

Christianity is not man-made because it is a religion of revelation—the truth of God and not the invention of man.

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **[“How Do I Witness to People Conditioned for Soundbites?”](#)**

**First let me say what an encouragement your site is to me. I truly enjoy engaging my mind about my faith and your site is a wonderful catalyst for this experience, I find too often that the church has a very anti-intellectual attitude, which brings me to my first of two questions:**

**1. For all the talk about using the mind in the Christian faith it at least in my opinion seems to be a hallow protest because our culture is absolutely mindless, both the secular side and the Christian side (generally outside of academia and some exceptions). I suppose what I'm saying is that I have found my desire to be a well thinking Christian a handicap for witnessing and contending for my faith in the normal everyday practical world, where people my age speak in slang, are induced my degenerate immoral images, and have grown up being bombarded with billions of bits of emotional, and psychological information throughout their lives, normal people barely want to hear a well thought out statement anymore about anything because they are conditioned for soundbites and have been culturally reborn impatient, how am I to practically deal with this dilemma when I witness, and still keep my intellectual mind from going insane?? Or how do you deal with people who ask straw man questions?? Questions that are asked and really are framed in such a way that no answer is beneficial to actually knowing the truth but only serves to trap the Christian thinker in such a way that whatever answer he gives will just dig his own hole???**

*How am I to practically deal with this dilemma when I witness, and still keep my intellectual mind from going insane??*

It can be very frustrating trying to reason with people who aren't interested in or haven't been prepared to think well. But reason is the only tool we have (humanly speaking) to combat this problem. We can't turn to, say, force to bring people around. That will only enforce the "will to power" mentality of our age—that might makes right. So what we must do is take people to those issues which they do think about to get them into a mental framework suitable for thinking about spiritual matters. Of course, once the topic of religion comes up they might very well shift to a "this works for me" or "whatever you believe" attitude. At that point, however, we can simply ask if they think religion falls into a special category where thinking is prohibited, and if so, why. If they should say that religion deals with abstract ideas, we can point them to the factual aspects of Christianity. People who aren't interested in thinking or who are convinced that thinking is unnecessary or prohibited in certain areas cannot be intellectually pressed to think. We have to sneak in the back door, as it were. Get them thinking, and then shift to the things we want them to think about.

*Or how do you deal with people who ask straw man questions??*

If they should ask straw man questions, we can ask them (gently) the relevance of the question. If they seem to be simply out to trap us, we can ask how significant the particular issue is. I see no problem with pointing out that it seems they're trying to trap us! We can ask if they're serious about discussing the issue.

**2. The second question deals with form criticism and its related annoyances. If Christianity is actually "true" and not just something that is relatively true as long as people believe in it, during the time when Christ was on earth why did no one actually write immense volumes of material about what He actually did while He was doing it??? He was GOD for goodness sake!?! I mean according to the gospels he healed tons of people and did things people never saw before, but we don't really have any actual at hand testimony of this stuff??? Yes we have outside historical references, but honestly they are seriously lacking in content, and the gospels conservatively estimated about 50 years after his ascension? I have honestly thought about this, and it just makes me wonder??? Yes I have evaluated the lives of the apostles and alot of the other evidences for Christianity but sometimes it just seems as though God decided to make it either/or. It could be a lie and a bunch of stories formed down through time or it could be true: why didn't God make the evidence clear and bulletproof? I have never understood this. It just seems the whole thing seems dependent on man's thinking and not on God's clear revelation. (Did he make it really clear if no one really wrote about until at least 50 years later?) Like biblical scholars will sugar up the outside historical references and stuff. Perhaps my thinking is flawed here, any answer you have to remove this difficulty will certainly help??**

A good recent work of apologetics for these questions is Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ*. I encourage you to get a copy and read the fuller answers to your questions. I'll also refer below to John Bloom's article "[Why Isn't the Evidence Clearer?](#)".

You said there is no "at hand testimony." What about that of Matthew, John, James and Peter? Surely these apostles and New Testament writers had direct experience with Christ. Paul was taught by the risen Lord. Luke did his research carefully, talking to those who walked with Christ.

Regarding the dates of the New Testament writings: The book of Acts must have been written before A.D. 62, since it contains no mention of Paul's death. Thus, Luke must have been written before that, and Mark before Luke (since Luke drew from Mark). This puts two of the Gospels within 30 years of Jesus.

Why weren't there mountains of writings about Jesus from his time? Perhaps because journalism as we know it wasn't practiced then. It seems apparent that people did write down things Jesus said and did. But we wouldn't expect the kind of written coverage historical events get today.

Why didn't God make it all clearer? John Bloom has a few suggestions. He notes first:

There are two reasonable demands for any set of evidence. First, the evidence should be clear enough to be intellectually sound at the same level of certainty one uses in making other important decisions. Second, the evidence must be clear enough to select one set of claims over another (that is, clear enough to select Christianity over other religions).

For a point of comparison Bloom considers the knowledge gained from science. He says:

Often the data are inconclusive or ambiguous preventing a rigorous conclusion. However, abandoning the research and pronouncing that no one can ever discover the answer is poor methodology. The fact is that the natural order rarely produces ideal data, and nature appears to be more far more complex the more we know about it.

Do we give up on learning about nature because the facts aren't always so clear? Likewise, we wouldn't expect to find the rich truths of our faith to be so easily searched out and set forth.

Bloom also considers the possibility that God might have good reasons for not making it all clearer.

But even if He reveals evidence of Himself only to benefit us, why isn't He more forthright about it? This much seems clear: If He made His presence or the evidence too obvious, it would interfere with His demonstration, which is intended to draw out or reveal the true inner character of mankind. We know from several passages of Scripture that this is part of God's purpose for maintaining a relative silence. For example, in Psalm 50:21-22 we read, "These things you have done, and I kept silence; you thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you, and state the case in order before your eyes." From these statements we come to see that God is not struggling desperately to gain man's attention. Actually He is restraining Himself in order to demonstrate to human beings something about our inner character, or tendency to evil.

Finally, Bloom notes that we often don't believe evidence which is perfectly clear. In Romans 1 we read that God has made Himself known to everyone, yet many refuse to believe. Says Bloom:

Given this tendency on the part of man, how clear does the evidence have to be before people would universally recognize the existence of the God of the Bible? Would a cross in the sky actually be sufficient to convert Carl Sagan? Would the performance of an undeniable miracle in a scoffer's presence be enough? However impressive such feats would be, the records of history show that most people choose to ignore whatever evidence they have, no matter how clear it may be.

Some, for example, will insist upon starting with naturalistic presuppositions and conclude that Christianity can't be true! Atheists are adept at using this kind of reasoning. They will say, like



Bertrand Russell, "Not enough evidence!" What they want is evidence which fits within the narrow confines of their naturalism. Such reductionism doesn't provide for good reasoning.

God has given plenty of evidence for His existence and for the truth of the faith. It is up to the individual to consider the evidence and respond to it.

Rick Wade  
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## **"This World is Far From Perfect"**

**I just read your article about [evidence of God's existence](#). I just want to say that this world is quite far from being perfect. A perfect world would be a world free of racism, hypocrisy, and genocide just to name a few. If God had made a perfect world it would have been a world free of these things. And the section about Jesus being the "proof," well there is no proof of there being a Jesus except the Bible which may be false also.**

You are so very right. This world IS quite far from being perfect. However, this isn't the world that God created. That world was absolutely perfect, with no racism, hypocrisy or genocide. But Adam and Eve chose to go their own way and disobey God, and when they did they plunged the world into awful consequences they could never have foreseen. A world of ugliness and hate and violence, in addition to the evils you mentioned. In fact, as I watched the attacks on the World Trade Center, I thought what a horrible parallel it was to how God must have felt when His beautiful, perfectly-working world was devastated and defaced by sin. We call it "the fall," and as I watched both towers collapse I thought what an apt description it is of what happened to our world back in the Garden of Eden.

This, however, does not change the fact that our world is perfectly designed to sustain life. What hurtful things happen on the earth, and how the earth was fashioned and placed here with just the right parameters to support life, are apples and oranges. Completely different issues.

Concerning there being no proof of Jesus' existence, well, I guess you haven't really seriously examined that, or you would have discovered that there is more evidence for the existence of Jesus than for most other famous people in the ancient world. I'm sorry, I can't take your criticism any more seriously than the young man who came up to me after a conference and told me he didn't believe he existed. I can take YOU seriously, and I do, but not your charge. It won't hold water. There's a whole discipline called "history" that would prove your charge to be groundless. At the very least, allow me to suggest you read my colleague Michael Gleghorn's article [Ancient Evidence for Jesus from Non-Christian Sources](#).

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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# **“The Difference Between Religions and Jesus”**

I want to thank you for the well written article [“A Short Look at Six World Religions”](#) and how they relate to Christianity. My small group has been studying this subject and this goes right along with what we have been studying. I would like permission to make printouts for the other members of my group (about a dozen people) since some do not have Internet access.

I recently had a chance to go through the “Contagious Christian” course and then to talk to two Jehovah’s Witnesses who came to my door. I did just as you suggested, talking to them boldly about my faith in Jesus as the Son of God but also as one of the three persons of God. It is difficult to help people understand how God can be Jehovah, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and not be three gods.. but I feel that if I can totally understand God then maybe He isn’t big enough to help me with all of my problems. And I know that God is big enough for all of my problems. Even big enough to give me the answers I need if I pray and seek.

Our pastor recently preached a sermon that was brought back to me by your article. His words (paraphrased) were:

**Religions promise to show a way to God...**

**Jesus says, “I am the Way.” Religions say that there are many truths...**

**Jesus says, “I am the Truth.” Religions promise to show light...**

**Jesus says, “I am the Light of the world.” Religions promise a chance for eternal life...**

**Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Religions offer guides...**

**Jesus says, “I am the Good Shepherd.” Religions offer to show us god (or gods)...**

**Jesus says, “I AM.” Besides that, Christianity is the only “religion” with a living Founder. I say, why follow a loser?!**

**Guess that about breaks down the differences! ☐**

Thank you for your kind words. I’m so glad my article is helpful to you! Of course you may make printouts, for as many people as you want-that’s why we have them online, and I am honored that you want to do this!

I am familiar with the list your pastor offered, and think it’s one of the best supports for our faith in Jesus as Savior. Especially as we just celebrated Resurrection Day-why would anybody want to serve any religion founder other than a Risen God? No placing flowers on Jesus’ tomb for us! Praise the Lord!

The Lord bless you and keep you.

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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# **“We Only Learn from What We Experience in Life-Stop Judging!”**

**How can you be so sure of what you write? We only learn from what we experience in life. Expand your horizons, stop judging and embrace life. Peace.**

Dear friend,

How do you know that experience is the only source of knowledge? I would suggest that that is an unnecessarily narrow understanding of how we gain knowledge. I would also suggest that you do not live by this belief. Since you appear to be a student from your e-mail address, let me ask: Have you passed any history classes? You didn't *experience* the subjects of the classes; you learned about them a different way. Did you ever see someone do something unwise or dumb and choose not to do it? You learned without experiencing.

We suggest that there are four primary ways we learn things:

1. Experience: living through it (for example, getting burned by putting a hand on a stovetop or in a flame)
2. Reasoning: figuring things out (for example, logic-2 premises and a conclusion. “My husband earned his doctorate. Ph.D.s are earned in graduate school. Therefore, Ray went through graduate school.”)
3. Observation: watching (things always fall down, not up)
4. Revelation: being told from an outside source. Some things we can't know without being told. (for example, what God tells us in the Bible and through the person of Jesus Christ)

The reason you (correctly) discern confidence in our writing is that our faith is based on strong evidence, and because we understand that there are other ways of knowing than experience.

If you truly are curious-as opposed to simply venting some steam-we have a couple of articles you may find interesting:

- [“Confident Belief](#) by Rick Wade
- [“How I Know Christianity Is True](#) by Pat Zukeran

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“What’s a Good Book to Give to a Seeker?”**

**My coworker seems to be searching about religion in general. She is a single mom and I want to provide her a book to gain insight into Christianity and how it will change her life. Something that is simple and easy to read. Do you have any recommendations?**

Yes!! Lee Strobel’s excellent book *The Case for Christ*. Your coworker doesn’t need Christianity. . . she needs Jesus. Strobel was a hardened atheist, a journalist for the *Chicago Tribune*, who chased down experts who could talk to him about Christ. It not only is very convincing, it’s a wonderful way to walk through his steps toward placing his faith in Christ himself.

I’m glad you asked!

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“There Is No Evidence for God or the Bible”**

**I read your article about the [evidence for God’s existence](#). Although it was an interesting article, I didn’t really see any evidence of God’s existence in the article. I am a believer in God’s existence. However, my belief is strictly faith based. I suppose it is possible that God does not exist. I choose to believe that he does. There are many things in the world we live in and our Universe that are truly amazing and unexplainable. But just because something is strange, amazing, awesome, mind boggling or unexplainable, does not mean it is evidence of God’s existence.**

**Just like the existence of God cannot be proven, the Holy Bible itself can not be proven that it is the inspired word of God. There simply is no evidence. It is faith that people have in that it is the word of God. It can never be proven. This is very hard for many Christians to accept, but it is the undeniable truth. You believe because you choose to believe and for no other reason.**

I think perhaps you misunderstand the difference between evidence and proof. I agree with you that we do not have proof of God’s existence or that the Bible is the Word of God. However, what we do have is very powerful evidence that choosing to put our trust in God in His word is a reasonable choice.

Recently my husband was up on the roof of our house putting up Christmas lights. From inside the house, I heard noises above my head that sounded like footsteps. And when I looked out the window, I saw a man’s shadow on the ground that indicated there was a person on the roof. Since Ray had told me he was going up on the roof, I believed he was up there. Could I prove it from inside the house? No, but it was completely reasonable for me to look at the evidence and conclude my husband was putting up Christmas lights.

Sometimes people look evidence full in the face and then deny it. Our founder, Jimmy Williams, is

fond of telling the story of the man who went to a psychiatrist convinced that he was dead. The psychiatrist was unsuccessful at talking him out of his illusion. Finally he asked him, "Do dead men bleed?" The patient said no, they don't. The psychiatrist pulled out his Swiss army knife, reached over and nicked the man's finger. Amazed, the patient exclaimed, "Well, how about that! Dead men DO bleed!"

See the difference between evidence and proof?

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

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## [Why Didn't God Communicate to Us More Clearly?](#)

**Why is there so much confusion among believers and denominations? Why didnt God state everything in a simple, abridged manner to avoid this cluster of contradictory interpretations? This not only relates to young earth vs old earth, but on hundreds of doctrinal topics.**

Thanks for your letter. You ask a very good question: "Why didn't God state everything in a simple, abridged manner to avoid this cluster of contradictory interpretations?"

Let me attempt to provide some possible options to consider. Before doing so, however, I must honestly admit that I do not know (with any certainty) why God did things the way He did. The only way I could know this would be if God had told me. And He hasn't. However, He may have given us some clues in the Bible itself.

First, I think we should always bear in mind that MOST of the Bible is readily comprehensible when read carefully. To be sure, there are "some things hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16), but much of the Bible (when read carefully) is readily understandable.

Second, sometimes man's difficulty with biblical interpretation stems from sinfulness and a strong motivation not to WANT to understand what the text says. This, I think, is why Jesus sometimes spoke in parables. Parables revealed spiritual truth to those open to receive it, but hid the truth from those who rejected Jesus and His message. Along these lines, note in particular Jesus' statement in Matthew 13:10-17-

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"  
Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

"For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

"Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

“In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, ‘YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;  
FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.’

“But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

“For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

(See also Isaiah 6:9-10; Mark 4:11-12; Luke 8:16-18; etc.). Thus, some of the difficulty with understanding God’s word comes from man’s sinfulness, hard-heartedness, and unbelief.

Finally, with those passages which are really difficult, and about which very good Christian scholars differ, I think we have a motivation to dig deeper into God’s word, to study more diligently, to seek His meaning more carefully and prayerfully. By agonizing over difficulties, many Christians have gained a very deep knowledge of the Scriptures.

These are at least some POSSIBLE reasons why God’s word is sometimes difficult to understand. I hope they help at least a little bit.

The Lord bless you,

Michael Gleghorn  
Probe Ministries