

“Help Me Understand These Bible Contradictions”

Dr. Michael Gleghorn

I stumbled upon a website that has an exhaustive list of apparent contradictions in the Bible. Now, I can go through many of them and figure out that what is seen as an apparent contradiction is nothing of the sort, but many of them leave me searching vigorously for an answer. Can you help me on these?

God is tired and rests [Ex 31:17, Jer 15:6]

God is never tired and never rests [Is 40:28]

and:

God is the author of evil [Lam 3:38, Jer 18:11, Is 45:7, Amos 3:6, Ezek 20:25]

God is not the author of evil [1 Cor 14:33, Deut 32:4, James 1:13]

Let's begin with the first difficulty:

God is tired and rests [Ex 31:17, Jer 15:6]

God is never tired and never rests [Is 40:28]

This alleged difficulty confuses the issues of being tired, on the one hand, and resting, on the other. Exodus 31:17 does say that God “rested” or “ceased” His creative work on the seventh day. It does not say that God was tired. Jeremiah 15:6 (at least the relevant portion) might be translated, “I am weary of relenting” or “I have grown tired of feeling sorry for you”. The idea is not that God is “tired” in the sense of “fatigued.” Rather, God is weary of holding back His righteous judgment. Note what He says right before this phrase, “So I have unleashed my

power against you and have begun to destroy you” (Net Bible - netbible.bible.org). These are not the words of a being who is tired in the sense of needing rest. These are the words of one who is tired of restraining His righteous judgment.

Thus, there is no contradiction with Isaiah 40:28, “He does not get tired or weary.” For Exodus 31:17 does not say that God was tired, and Jeremiah 15:6 does not mean that God was tired in the sense of being “fatigued.” The Bible does say that God rested, but it does not imply that this was due to tiredness on God’s part. The Net Bible comments on Gen. 2:2 as follows: “The Hebrew term (shabbat) can be translated ‘to rest’ (‘and he rested’) but it basically means ‘to cease.’ This is not a rest from exhaustion; it is the cessation of the work of creation.”

But what about the second alleged difficulty?

*God is the author of evil [Lam 3:38, Jer 18:11, Is 45:7, Amos 3:6, Ezek 20:25]
God is not the author of evil [1 Cor 14:33, Deut 32:4, James 1:13]*

Geisler and Howe have an excellent discussion of this issue in their book, *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties*. I would heartily recommend this book, along with Gleason Archer’s *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*. Both books deal with just about every Bible difficulty which critics raise against the Bible. So what do they say about this difficulty?

God is NOT the author of evil in the sense of “sin” or “moral evil” — at least not directly. God created free morally responsible creatures (like human beings) who chose to misuse their freedom to do what was morally evil. However, God is not the author of this evil; human beings are. God made such evil possible (by creating free moral creatures), but the creatures made such evil actual (by sinning, etc.).



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However, God is sometimes the author of evil in the sense of “calamities” or “non-moral evil.” Such calamities might also be caused by Satan or demons (e.g. Job 1-2). However, God can also bring about calamities as a form of judgment against sin, etc. God does punish sin, sometimes through various calamities. But God is not the author of moral evil or sin.

I hope this makes sense. I would definitely recommend the books mentioned above by Archer and Geisler. I would also recommend the Biblical Studies Foundation website at www.netbible.com. They have hundreds of articles on a variety of biblical and theological issues.

The Lord bless you!

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