SOME CONTRADICTIONS IN THE FIRST SIX BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

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The Bible contains both internal and external contradictions. (An internal contradiction occurs when the Bible contradicts in one place what it says in another. An external contradiction occurs when the Bible contradicts what science and history have established.) Since contradictions in the Bible are especially important for proving that fundamentalism is an inadequate approach to scripture, I here present some salient contradictions in Genesis through Joshua.

Water exists (Gen 1:2) before anything else exists (Gen 1:3-31). But oxygen, a component of water, did not exist until after stars had formed.

Light exists (Gen 1:3-5) before stars exist (Gen 1:16).

Day and night, and morning and evening, exist (Gen 1:4-5) before the sun, moon, and stars exist (Gen 1:14-16).

The sky is a dome (Gen 1:6-8), but in reality there is no dome.

Vegetation appears (Gen 1:9-13) before the sun appears (Gen 1:16).

God creates plants and later creates humans (Gen 1:11, 26-27). *Or*: God creates a human and only later creates plants (Gen 2:4-9).

God creates birds (Gen 1:20-23), then land animals. But birds evolved from reptiles.

God rested (Gen 2:2). But God, being omnipotent, has no need to rest.

God creates animals and later creates humans (Gen 1:24-25, 26-27). *Or*: God creates a human and only later creates animals (Gen 2:4-7, 18-20).

God creates male and female humans simultaneously (Gen 1:26-27). *Or*: God creates the man and only later creates the woman (Gen 2:7, 21-22).

Creation took 7 days (Gen 1:1-2:4a). *Or*: creation took 1 day (Gen 2:4b).

Creation took one week (Gen 1:1-2:4a). But in fact it took approximately 13.7 billion years for humans to appear.

The Bible says that the Universe is about 6000 years old. (Using biblical data, Archbishop James Usscher in 1650 determined that creation began on 23 Oct. 4004 bc [of the Julian calendar: 21 Sept. of the present Gregorian calendar]; the Hebrew calendar, based on biblical data, reckons the year ad 2020 as the year 5780 since creation.]) But science has established that the Universe is 13.7 billion years old.

The Bible says that humans are about 6000 years old. But science says that humans are about 300,000 years old.

The third and fourth humans are Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-2). Yet in Cain’s lifetime the world is sufficiently populous that Cain can build a city (Gen 4:17).

God tells Noah to take one pair of each kind of animal (Gen 6:19-20). *Or*: he tells Noah to take seven pairs of each clean animal and one pair of each unclean animal (7:2-3). (Noah takes one pair of each kind of animal, Gen 7:7-9.)

The flood lasted 40 days (Gen 7:4, 12). *Or*: the flood lasted 150 days (Gen 7:11, 24; 8:2).

The waters recede below the mountaintops (8:5). Later they are still above the mountaintops (8:9).

Beersheba was so named to commemorate a cov­en­ant between Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:31). *Or*: it was named from an incident concerning Isaac and Abimelech (Gen 26:31).

Jacob named Bethel on his journey to Paddan-aram (Gen 28:19). *Or*: he named it on his return many years later (Gen 35:14-15).

Jacob was nicknamed “Israel” at Peniel (Gen 32:28). *Or*: he was nicknamed “Israel” at Bethel (Gen 35:10).

Judah proposed to his brothers that they sell Joseph to some Ishmael­ites (Gen 37:27). *Or*: Midianites kidnapped Joseph without the brothers knowing (Gen 37:28-30).

God is known to the patriarchs as “Yahweh” (Gen 4:26, “At that time [birth of Adam’s third son] people began to invoke the name of the Lord [Hebrew *Yahweh*]”; see also Gen 4:1; 15:2, 7-8; 16:2; 18:14; 19:13; 24:31; 28:13). *But*: centuries later God says, “I ap­peared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty [Hebrew *el Shaddai*], but by my name ‘the Lord’ I did not make myself known to them” (Exod 6:3).

All plants in Egypt die in plague 4 (Exod 8:24), *Or*: flax and barley die in plague 7 (Exod 9:31), and locusts kill plants in plague 8 (Exod 10:15).

All cattle in Egypt die in plague 5 (Exod 9:6). *Or*: cattle still die in plague 7 (Exod 9:19).

Passover is a family meal at home (Exod 12:3-4). *Or*: passover must be celebrated at the temple (Deut 16:5-6).

People are to roast the passover lamb over fire; they are not to boil it. (Exod 12:8-9). *Or*: they are to boil the lamb (Deut 16:7).

A Hebrew male slave must be released after six years, whereas a He­brew female slave is not entitled to release (Exod 21:2-11). *Or*: the female slave, like the male, must be re­leased after six years (Deut 15:12).

Sacrifice may be offered at altars to be set up in every place (Exod 20:24). *Or*: sacrifice may be offered at only one sanctu­ary (Deut 12:14).

One who accidentally kills another may seek sanctuary at the altar (Exod 21:12-13). *Or*: such a person may seek sanctu­ary in one of three cities (Deut 19:1-13). *Or*: such a person may seek sanctu­ary in one of six cities (Num 35:9-15).

Only descendants of Aaron may offer sac­ri­fices (Exod 28:1). *Or*: any of the descendants of Levi may offer sacri­fices (Deut 18:7).

God punishes children for their parents’ sins to the fourth generation (Exod 34:6-7). *Or*: each person is only responsible for his or her sins (Deut 7:9-10).

The feast of booths lasts 8 days (Lev 23:36). *Or*: it lasts 7 days (Deut 16:15).

The tabernacle is (a) simple, (b) outside the camp, and (c) cared for by Joshua a­lone (Exod 33:7-11; Num 11:16 ff., 12:4 ff.). *Or*: it is (a) elaborate, (b) always at the center of the Israelites, and (c) cared for by more than 8000 Levites (Exod 25-31, 35-40; Num 1:49-53; 3-4).

The Israelites set up twelve stones from the Jordan River at Gilgal (Josh 4:8). *Or*: they set up the stones in the middle of the river (Josh 4:9).

The Israelites are to shout when rams’ horns blast (Josh 6:5). *Or*: The Israelites are to shout when Joshua commands them to (Josh 6:10).

Joshua sends 30,000 men at night to lie in ambush west of Ai (Josh 8:3, 9). *Or*: he sends 5,000 men the next morning (Josh 8:12).