

CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE?

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Use the AIR Method to resolve apparent inconsistencies as consistent.

Sometimes one Bible passage seems to disagree with another. Critics call these contradictions, while Christians may wonder how both passages can be true when they appear to be inconsistent.

The **Apparent Inconsistency Resolution (AIR) Method** gives Christians seven steps for examining these difficulties while recognizing that Scripture is God's inerrant, consistent Word.

An apparent inconsistency may result from misunderstanding a passage, overlooking context, or failing to consider other passages. The goal isn't to explain away Scripture or force it to agree with our opinions. The goal is to understand what God has said.

The Bible is without error. Our understanding of it is not.

1. PRAY FOR WISDOM

Begin by asking God to help you understand His Word. James writes, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5 KJV). The psalmist prayed, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (Ps. 119:18 ESV).

Pray for understanding, humility, and a willingness to accept what Scripture teaches. Prayer doesn't replace careful study; it expresses dependence upon God as we study.

2. TRUST THAT SCRIPTURE IS GOD'S CONSISTENT AND TRUE WORD

"All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Tim. 3:16 ESV). Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17 CSB).

Always assume that the Bible is consistent and true and therefore there is a right answer, even if you don't fully understand it.

Distinguish **God's infallible Word from your fallible interpretation.**

Reconsider your understanding rather than immediately accusing Scripture of error.

3. REMEMBER THAT ALL SCRIPTURE COMES FROM THE ETERNAL TRIUNE GOD

Jesus has always been God the Son. Jesus didn't begin to exist when He was born of Mary. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1 KJV).

The Bible says, "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Tim. 3:16 ESV), and "God" means the eternal Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). Therefore, the whole Bible was "breathed out" by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The Son wasn't absent from the Old Testament, and He didn't come to correct mistakes made by the Father. Don't set Jesus against the Father or the New Testament against the Old.

The words printed in red are **not** more inspired than the rest. Jesus affirmed that “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35 NASB).

4. SUBMIT TO THE BIBLE INSTEAD OF SUBJECTING THE BIBLE TO YOUR JUDGMENT

“Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world, rather than Christ” (Col. 2:8 CSB).

Our traditions, preferences, opinions, and cultural assumptions must answer **to** Scripture—not the other way around. Don’t choose an interpretation merely because it excuses what you already want to believe or do.

5. CONSIDER THAT WE MAY NOT BE MEANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING

“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God” (Deut. 29:29 KJV).

Paul likewise writes, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12 ESV),

God hasn’t promised to answer every question we can imagine. Sometimes further study resolves a difficulty; sometimes we find possible explanations without knowing which is correct.

Admit what you don’t know instead of inventing an answer and presenting it as certain.

6. CONSULT FAITHFUL TEACHERS AND STUDY FURTHER

“But in abundance of counselors there is victory” (Prov. 11:14 NASB).

Consult faithful pastors, teachers, study Bibles, and commentaries that clearly affirm the inerrancy of Scripture. Consider their explanations, but don’t make any teacher the final authority. **Avoid teachers who deny the inerrancy of God's Word.**

The Bereans were commended for “examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11 ESV). Test every explanation against Scripture, including explanations from your favorite teacher.

7. INTERPRET SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE—IN CONTEXT

“The sum of Your word is truth” (Ps. 119:160 NASB).

Read the surrounding verses. Ask who is speaking, to whom, and about what. Then examine other passages addressing the same subject. **Consider the Bible’s whole teaching** rather than building an interpretation around an isolated, cherry-picked phrase.

Don’t use one verse to cancel another. **Interpret Scripture with Scripture.**

EXAMPLE: SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE?

Jesus said, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1 KJV).

Yet He also said, “judge according to righteous judgment” (John 7:24 CSB).

Does Jesus forbid judgment or command it? Apply the AIR Method.

In Matthew 7:3–5, Jesus condemns noticing another person’s small fault while ignoring your own larger fault.

He commands you to remove your own log first and “then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:5 ESV).

Jesus doesn’t forbid helping someone deal with sin. He forbids hypocritical judgment.

John 7:24 commands righteous judgment rather than judgment based on appearances.

The two passages agree: Don’t judge hypocritically; judge rightly.

EXAMPLE: IS GOD ONE OR THREE?

The Bible says, “The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deut. 6:4 KJV).

Jesus commands baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19 ESV). At Jesus’ baptism, the Son is baptized, the Spirit descends, and the Father speaks from heaven (Matt. 3:16–17). John likewise says the Word was “with God” and “was God” (John 1:1 KJV).

And so, the Bible teaches that there is **one God**, not three gods. It also reveals three distinct divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

Is God one or three? Apply the AIR Method.

The passages agree: **God is one Being who eternally exists as three distinct Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

EXAMPLE: ARE WE SAVED BY FAITH OR BY WORKS?

Paul writes that “one is justified by faith apart from works of the law” (Rom. 3:28 ESV). Yet James says, “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26 KJV).

Are we saved by faith or by works? Apply the AIR Method.

Paul explains **how sinners are justified before God**: by faith, not by earning salvation through works. James explains **what genuine faith looks like**: true saving faith produces obedience.

Works do not cause salvation; they demonstrate that faith is real (Eph. 2:8–10).

The passages agree: **we are saved for works, not by works.**

CONCLUSION

Pray, assume Scripture’s consistency, remember its Triune Author, submit to its authority, acknowledge your limitations, consult faithful teachers, and interpret Scripture with Scripture.

The AIR method is about understanding and obeying God’s Word. Jesus said, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (John 8:31 NASB).

When Scripture seems inconsistent, don’t discard it. Let God’s Word correct your understanding.