

“The Nature of the Bible I - Problems”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden
for First UMC, Grand Junction, Sunday, October 20, 2019

Brief Biblical Survey, but Sufficient for Demonstrating the Point

- ❖ The first two accounts of Creation: Gen. 1:1-2:4a and 2:4b-25.
- ❖ The two different accounts of the story of the Great Flood, e.g., “one pair of animals”, Gen. 6:19-20 vs. “eight pairs of animals” of different categories: 7 pairs of “clean” animals and 1 pair of “unclean”, Gen. 7:2-3.
 - ✓ “Clean” vs. “unclean” is problematic in itself in Genesis b/c those categories aren’t introduced until the Law of Moses (Leviticus) much later in the Hebrew narrative.
- ❖ Deut 5:2-4f vs. the punishment for faithlessness in Numbers 33 – that generation with whom the covenant “Moses” refers to in Deut was made having been wiped out in the wandering in the desert for forty years.
- ❖ The stories of the deaths of King Saul are markedly different if you compare 1 Samuel 31 and the very next chapter, 2 Samuel 1. In the former, upon being mortally wounded by a group of Philistine archers, King Saul kills himself by falling on his own sword after his armor bearer refused to put him out of his misery at Saul’s own pleading. In the latter, an Amalekite loyal to David kills Saul at Saul’s

own request, Saul having been wounded in an unexplained way presumably in the same battle narrated at the end of 1 Samuel.

- ❖ Numerous other differences show up comparing narratives in the books of Kings with similar ones in the books of Chronicles.
- ❖ Differences in the “birth narratives” of Matthew and Luke, some very problematic, e.g. the flight to Egypt in Matthew 2 vs. the holy family’s return home to Nazareth in Luke 2 after the time of Mary’s purification was complete.
- ❖ Differences in the ending of the Gospels.
 - In Mark and Matthew, the 11 disciples are instructed to go straight to Galilee where Jesus would meet them.
 - In Luke, Jesus tells them to remain in Jerusalem until they are “clothed with power from on high” (24:49). This sets up the coming of the Holy Spirit at the Jewish feast of Pentecost, 7 weeks later.
 - John introduces a fresh discrepancy: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit upon the 10 (Thomas isn’t there in 20:19-23; cf. 20:24) the evening of what we would call “Easter Sunday” and commissions them for apostolic service (20:21-22).

The Gospel differences in light of the “Lukan prologue”, Luke 1:1-4, are highly problematic: We have to judge the stories in the other Gospels as being “wrong” if Luke tells similar stories differently.