



The Caller

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Confidence Comer John F. Board

In this week's *Confidence Corner* we want to review the principle that not everything that appears to be a contradiction, is actually a contradiction. This can be very helpful when others who claim the Bible is full of contra-

dictions challenge new Christians. The interesting thing is that though many claim the Bible is full of contradictions, if challenged to present one, the critic usually is silent—they are only repeating something they have heard. Nonetheless, by reviewing this principle we can help any Christian who is challenged by critics of the Bible.

Simply put the Law of Contradiction states that something cannot both be and not be at the same time, the same sense, and the same place. Using the old illustration of someone saying "the door is open... the door is closed," though at first it may seem like a contradiction, when all things are considered, it may not be a contradiction at all. "How can that be?" someone may ask. Well a person could be talking about two different doors (one of which is open and the other closed), they could see a door open and say "the door is open" and then go close the door and say "the door is closed" and both of those statements could be true. In addition if someone knocks on a physically closed door, a person may respond, "Come on in, it's open." So using this simple illustration one can see that two statements that appear to be opposing statements, may not indeed be opposing statements.

Apply one brief Bible example. In Galatians 6:2 and 6:5, in many standard translations, there appears to be a contradiction within a few verses. 6:2 states "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ." 6:5 states, "Each man shall bear his own burden." Well which is it? Most new translations clear up the matter by more accurately translating the Greek words employed in each verse. In 6:2 the Greek word means "common affliction." In 6:5 the Greek word means "personal responsibility." While we can help others with common afflictions we face, only the individual themselves can answer to God.

So again, not every time someone alleges that the Bible is full of contradictions do you have to be concerned. Your responsibility is simply to show one possible way the passages may be harmonized.

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Where are you a citizen?
Most of the people in our country have pride in being an American, and that can be a good thing. I'd encourage Christians to be patriotic as long as they keep it in the proper perspective.

Kurt's Kolum Kurt Montooth

Philippians 3:20 says, "For our citizenship is in heaven." Because of this I want us to remember a few things as it pertains to our citizenship.

1. Our home is in heaven, we can be comfortable, we can enjoy our time here, but heaven is where a Christian belongs. Earth can be fun BUT it's nothing compared to what heaven will be! We should never be too settled or too satisfied!

2. The culture is vastly different. If you have ever traveled to a foreign country or done mission work you have realized that there are different customs, habits, people act, and in most cases, people speak differently. Same for Christians on earth! We are not of this world and we shouldn't act like it!

3. We are here on a temporary work visa (not vacation)! People travel and leave home for many reasons, one of the most common is probably to go on vacation.

However, as Christians that's not what we are doing here on earth. We are not here to have a good time and we are not here to just relax and have fun—we are here to work! Luke 10:2 reads, "And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." We are supposed to be workers! Life is not about our enjoyment but our service to God!

Sunday's Sermons:

**A.M. — Healthy Churches
Acts 2:17-21**

**P.M. — Out of Darkness
I John 1:5-7**

How Would You React if a Serpent Talked to You?

In this week's *Caller* I want to examine some thoughts on perhaps why Eve does not seem amazed when the serpent spoke to her. There's no indication that she thought the incident unusual. So what possible explanation could there be for this fact?

There have been some who have come up with odd explanations for that, such as, "Maybe animals back then could walk and talk." Such is really nothing more than speculation aimed at preserving an over literalized view of the text, and it's often accompanied by an appeal to science—a claim that snake anatomy shows snakes once had legs. It is quite interesting to me when someone attempts to defend biblical literalism by appealing to the evolutionary history of snakes.

The truth is that an ancient reader would not have expected Eve to be frightened. Given the context—she was in Eden (where to this point nothing "bad" had ever happened), the realm of YHWH and in Eden there is no indication that there would be fear prior to sin. Also in the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature of the Old Testament world, animal speech is not uncommon when tied to the world of the gods, or direct divine intervention. It was not so much that people of the ANE would have presumed that the animals they experienced in their normal lives could talk, but when the gods or magical forces were in view, that was a different story. Animals were often the vehicle for manifesting a supernatural presence or power in a story.

Consequently, the point of Genesis 3 is not to inform us about ancient zoology or a time when animals could talk (as we noted, animals in general did not talk...every indication in the Hebrew Bible and the ANE is that animals only spoke when a supernatural event was under consideration). The point intended to the readers of Genesis 3 was that an all-powerful God created the world; human beings are his created representatives; Eden was the dwelling place; there was present one being who was not pleased by God's decisions to create humanity and give them favor. All that leads to how humanity got into the mess it's in.

This is how we need to think about the story of Genesis 3. The readers would have known that the episode described interference in the Genesis narrative regarding man and his relationship to God by a supernatural created being—someone who was in opposition to God. The vocabulary used by the writer reveals several things about the divine enemy; it was much more than a mere serpent. If we're thinking only in terms of a serpent, we'll miss the messaging.

If it's true that the enemy in the garden was a supernatural being, then he wasn't merely a serpent. But it's also true that Eve being in the presence of God in the garden would have no reason to fear. Fear would not come till after sin.

*John F. Board
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