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Is Repentance required for salvation?

Since 1947, with the publishing of Lewis Sperry Chafer's Systematic Theology, there has been an effort to either "remove" repentance as a requirement for salvation or radically redefine it. Though Chafer himself was a Presbyterian, most Presbyterians would not agree with his view. Those that promote this idea today may identify as an Independent Fundamental Baptist or appeal to Free Grace theology, but others may promote these ideas without those associations or labels.

There are several reasons that people will accept this theology. Some hold that the King James Version of the Bible is the only translation one should use. While there is nothing wrong with that translation for the most part, there are varying degrees of extremist who demand only the KJV be read and studied. The argument goes, because God is said to repent (Jonah 3:9, 10), repent can never mean "turn from sin" or "turn from sins", nor does any Bible translation ever explicitly use the phrase "repent of sin". Repentance, based on this understanding, is simply a change of mind; like God "changing his mind" to no longer punish Nineveh (Jonah 3:10). The conclusion, they would argue, becomes when one is told to "repent and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15), repentance means merely a change of mind, restricted as a change of mind from unbelief to belief, ultimately making two actions one; salvation by "belief only".

The fruits and problems of this doctrine are many. For many, it is based solely on defining English words in the KJV, a sort of willful ignorance of original languages, context, and other factors. The Greek word *metanoia*, repent, does indeed mean both to change and to turn, and most if not all use in the New Testament doesn't restrict the meaning to one or the other. God is never said to undergo *metanoia*. Time and space will not permit a fuller explanation of the Hebrew terms or what the Old Testament means when God is said to "relent" from promised blessing and punishment (see Jeremiah 18:7-10 on the conditional nature of God's promises). Repentance in the New Testament is clearly a change of mind as well as turning from sin and toward God. Grudem defines repentance more fully this way: "Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ...Repentance, like faith, is an intellectual understanding (that sin is wrong), an emotional approval of the teachings of Scripture regarding sin (a sorrow for sin and a hatred of it), and a personal decision to turn from it (a renouncing of sin and a decision of the will to forsake it and lead a life of obedience to Christ instead)."

Now someone may still object that repentance as a turning, or turning from sin, is a work, and cannot be included

in salvation. Jonah 3:10 is still part of the basis for this kind of argument: "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." This can easily be cleared up if we understand the different kinds of works mentioned in Scripture. As for the redefinition of repentance as turning from unbelief to belief; is that not turning from a single sin and toward God, even if only mentally?

The Jonah 3 example does seem to indicate they turned from their evil way and put a stop to their sinful practices long enough to mourn in sackcloth and ashes and God responded to it positively. Some will certainly encourage those who are Christians to "repent of sin" in this way: stop drinking, stop viewing pornography, or stop other wrong behaviors. Some will admit that *unsaved people* can turn from sin in such a way. In summary, one can stop sinful behaviors before and after conversion, but not for salvation, because that would involve "works". Wherever this disagreement persists, at the very least all parties understand the importance of turning from sin as a Christian (Rom. 6:1f).

Others say repenting of "sins" is impossible because one would have to name every sin before they could be saved. This is an empty objection, because no definition of repentance demands naming each and every sin ever committed. Since the Ninevites, again, turned from their evil way, does this mean they successfully named every single sin ever committed? Again, this objection is unfounded and contradictory to their doctrine.

Romans 6:1

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

The reasoning is understandable if one tries to remove all works as necessary for salvation, but this fear of works righteousness leads them into another extreme. While others don't appear to wrestle with the problem of both belief and repentance being necessary for conversion and their affirmation of "faith alone", the solution is not to redefine or remove repentance. When the biblical question is asked, "What must I do (to be saved)?" (Acts 16:31; 2:37) and these conversations are had, some may further object that the focus is on man rather than man's responsibility. The discussion of salvation, however, is grounded firmly in the idea that Jesus offers the way, or is the Way, of salvation.

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Contradictions in the Bible (1)

<https://www.bartehrman.com/contradictions-in-the-bible/>

I find it remarkable that people in positions of authority, as Bart Ehrman, seem to have one mission, and that is to destroy the faith of some. A way, among many, in which they do this is to assert “Bible contradictions.” In the following article (and ones to follow), on Bart Ehrman’s website, author Marko Marina, a credentialed historian, professes his own piece on Bible contradictions. The utter failure in his work makes one (me) wonder about the authenticity of his credentials!

He starts out by taking a dictionary definition of the word *contradiction*. “A contradiction is a statement or phrase whose parts contradict each other (a round square is a contradiction in terms).” As far as a definition goes, this is fine; Marko, however, completely fails the application of this definition to any of the contradictions listed below. Compare the dictionary definition with one from a logic textbook: “A contradiction occurs when a proposition asserts both a statement and its negation simultaneously. In formal logic, this is often represented as $p \vee \sim p$, [“p” or “not p”] where p is a propositional variable. This means that if p is true, then $\sim p$ (not p) must also be true, which is logically impossible.”

In ordinary language, a contradiction occurs when one declares the sun is blistering hot today (as the temperature soars above 95 degrees without cloud cover shielding from its rays), and then in the same breath say it is freezing outside. Which is it? Do the sun’s rays make the temperature blazing hot or is it freezing (32 degrees and below)?

Marko writes, “In the context of the Bible, contradictions occur when there are two or more accounts of the same event or concept that differ so significantly they cannot both be true at the same time. It’s important to distinguish contradictions from mere differences (we’ll cover both categories).” As Marko attempts to make his case for Bible contradictions, not one time does he use Webster’s definition, and even less so a logic textbook definition.

#1 - The Earth Does Not Last Forever

“In Ecclesiastes 1:4, we read that ‘the earth remains forever,’ a sentiment echoed in Psalm 104:5, which praises God for laying the foundations of the earth so firmly that ‘it should never be moved.’

“However, this view contrasts sharply with certain passages in the New Testament that foresee the destruction of the current earth and the creation of a new one. For example, 2 Peter 3:13 describes the hope for ‘new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells,’ and Revelation 21:1 envisions ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ after the first has passed away.”

How shall we reply to this alleged contradiction? How did the Hebrew people understand such expressions as “the earth remains forever”? To begin, to refer to Ecclesiastes 1 and its connection to Psalm 104 is to miss the point of what the writer is saying and doing in both contexts, which is poetic writing to convey clarity without literalness. There are no doctrinal teachings in the passage of Ecclesiastes 1, only the perspective of one who lives in an environment,

making observations concerning what he sees. Ecclesiastes is not setting forth propositional language that is either true or false. Does the sun really rise and go down (1:5)? No contradiction, but a failure (refusal) to understand the style of writing.

What about 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21? We’ve already noticed his failure to recognize writing styles in Ecclesiastes referenced, so the reasonableness of him handling 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21 is now suspect. To what is Peter making reference? He refers to the words of Isaiah (65:17). The new heavens and new earth do not refer to some physical creation like the asserted “contradiction” Marko wants you to think. The context of Isaiah 65 is the Lord’s disappointment in His people Israel (the nation) turning their back on Him (65:1-16); the Lord is going to create something new, similar in tone to Jeremiah 31 (Isaiah 65:17-23). The Rabbis did not understand it to be some new physical creation of the world, though they certainly knew something different was afoot, exactly as Peter made clear. Thus, there is no contrast, no contradiction, only a failure (refusal) to understand what is being said and how words / terms are used to convey that.

#2 - The Number of Animals Noah Took on the Ark

“Another example that reminds us of the discrepancies in the Bible can be found in the story of Noah and the Ark. In Genesis 6:19-20, God commands Noah to take two of every kind of animal — one male and one female — onto the Ark to preserve their species. However, in Genesis 7:2-3, the instructions are more specific, stating that Noah should take seven pairs of clean animals (suitable for sacrifice) and one pair of unclean animals.

“So, which is it? This discrepancy reflects differing traditions within the text, likely stemming from the merging of multiple sources behind the composition of Genesis. As Robert Alter explains in his Commentary: ‘As scholarship has often noted, two versions of the Flood story, the Priestly and the Yahwistic, are **intertwined in a somewhat confusing fashion**... Abraham ibn Ezra and other medieval exegetes rescue consistency by proposing that when God directed attention to the clean-unclean distinction, He had to add the difference in numbers because more animals needed to be sacrificed. (Noah, like his counterpart in the Mesopotamian Flood stories, does in fact offer a thanksgiving sacrifice after the waters recede.) But the tensions between the two versions, including how they record the time span of the Flood, persist, and there are some indications that the editor himself struggled to harmonize them.’”

This is remarkable! The author of this “hopeful contradiction” answered it himself (the last sentence of the first paragraph)! More than that, the “hopeful contradiction” Marko desires has no merit at all in his framing of the problem. Not only is there a failure to understand the biblical text / context, but there is an attribution of multiple authors within the text without a shred of textual evidence, (Robert Alter, *et al* notwithstanding)! Thus, there is absolutely no contradiction, not even a consistency problem. The Lord told Noah to take two of every beast, and he did. Of those clean, he took 7 pairs, and of those unclean he took one pair. It is additional information and nothing

more.

#3 - Two Creation Stories

“In exploring other biblical contradictions, we are (for now) staying with the Book of Genesis, which begins with **two distinct accounts of creation**. In Genesis 1:1-2:3, it unfolds in a structured, ordered sequence over six days, culminating in the creation of humanity (male and female) together on the sixth day.

“In Genesis 2:4-25, however, the narrative is more **focused on human formation**. Here, man (Adam) is created first from the dust of the ground, followed by vegetation, animals, and finally, a woman (Eve) as a helper. This portrayal is more intimate and anthropocentric, with God personally shaping Adam and breathing life into him.”

Well, here again, we have a complete failure to demonstrate a contradiction, even as he worded it in his two paragraphs. He asserts “two distinct accounts of creation” and then declares one of those two is “focused on human formation,” which is exactly correct.

In Genesis 1, the following were created: light, an expanse (atmosphere), the sea and dry land (earth), lights in the expanse (sun, moon), sea creatures, land creatures, and then the first couple (humanity). There is no mention of a garden in chapter 1, but there is mention of vegetation, plants yielding seeds, and trees (1:11), presumably the unmentioned “Garden” of chapter 2. When we get to Genesis 2:4-7, the following sequence is before us: 1) lack of vegetation, 2) no rain, 3) no man, 4) man created. Did the garden come before man or after man (2:8)? In Genesis 1:11, vegetation was present, man was not. When man was created (day 6), there was a place ready for him to reside. In Genesis 2, there was a place for man’s residence, but is that Garden? In 2:15, we read the Garden was *already* present, for the Lord placed him there. Ellicott said in regards to 2:8, “The order followed in the text, namely, man first and the garden afterwards, is not that of chronology, but of precedence.”

Thus, there is no contradiction, neither is there any consistency problem with the reading or wording of the two accounts, just Marko trying to manipulate the biblical text.

#4 – Does God Forgive People?

“In 2 Kings 24:4, we encounter a stark declaration: ‘The LORD was not willing to forgive,’ specifically regarding the sins of King Manasseh, who led Judah into idolatry and shed innocent blood.

“This statement stands in tension with the broader biblical theme of God’s mercy and willingness to forgive, as seen in passages like Psalms 103:3,10, which praise God for forgiving iniquities and not treating humanity as their sins deserve.

“The contradiction deepens when we compare 2 Kings with 2 Chronicles. In the latter (2 Chronicles 33:19), we learn that Manasseh eventually repented, humbling himself before God, who then restored him.

“However, repentance and restoration are entirely absent from the account in Kings, which portrays Manasseh’s sins as the ultimate reason for Judah’s destruction — a punishment that fell upon generations long after his reign.”

Not once did he even come close!

It is remarkable to me this is seen as a contradiction! The biblical reference in 2 Kings 24 was after Manasseh was already dead. Thus, by this time, though Manasseh was dead and Jehokim was king, Judah passed the point of no return, Judah was going into Babylonian captivity. The forgiveness (or lack thereof) was in relation to Judah as a *nation*, not their individual, personal responses to the Lord’s will with a penitent heart. Manasseh, representing the nation, led them fast toward destruction. This is a “want-to-belief” that amounts to a strawman.

Simply because one account has information another account does not, is not in any way illustrative of a contradiction.

#5 – How Many Items?

“In the book of Ezra, we encounter a numerical inconsistency regarding the temple vessels that King Cyrus of Persia returned to the Jews for their use in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Ezra 1:9-10 provides a detailed inventory:

1,000 silver cymbals
29 knives (the exact meaning of the term is debated)
30 golden cups
410 silver cups
1,000 other devices

“This totals 2,469 items. Yet in Ezra 1:11, the text states that the total number of vessels returned was 5,400. This represents another example of the contradictions in the Bible, deriving from the difference between the listed items and the sum provided. Attempts to **harmonize** this contradiction by suggesting that not all items were included in the detailed list **seem unlikely**. Verse 10 explicitly states, ‘and 1,000 other devices,’ implying that all categories of vessels were accounted for.”

It is important for to remember, at the beginning of this article, how he defined a contradiction and how a logic textbook defines the word. In both cases, regardless of the definition applied, the author of these alleged contradictions failed to properly apply it. Not once did he even come close!

If an accurate definition of the word “contradiction” is applied, there is nothing in Ezra 1:9-11 that even remotely suggests a contradiction. Given his use of the data, what of those 3 verses illustrates a contradiction? Not-one-thing! He anticipates the reply to his alleged contradiction contention with how one might reply, and the best he can do is “seems unlikely”?

Conclusion: The author of these alleged “contradictions” in the Bible did a pitiful job at trying to make the case. As I prepare a series of articles, I have investigated 17 of his so-called contradictions in the Bible. I am sure he will do better, but to this point in my investigations, his failure is (will be) apparent to any honest reader. RT

The Gospel itself proclaims what Christ has done for mankind and is the power of God to motivate one to accept that. They must believe, repent, confess Christ and be baptized. Each must be done, but none of these actions earn or merit salvation. None of these actions are disqualified as works of the Law of Moses. Each, and nothing in addition to these, can be demonstrated in the New Testament as salvific and involved in conversion. “Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities.”

(Gavin James– Minister)

Stop Being a Bully

What is your opinion of a bully? The physical or psychological attacks of a bully can occur in many ways. God does not have very nice things to say about the actions of a bully. For one, they are not living peacefully with one another, and that is something we are encouraged to do. "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom 12:18 NKJV). Besides that, a bully is known to behave proudly, looking down on the one they are bullying. Speak falsely about themselves and their victim(s). Sowing all kinds of trauma for those around them, terrorizing their victim(s). The Lord has firmly stated that He hates this kind of behavior, which accurately describes most bullies. "These six *things* the LORD hates, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness *who* speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren" (Prov 6:16–19).

Would you ever bully someone? Your first thought should be, "Of course not!" However, honestly, for a lot of us, we are busy bullying someone every single day. Who is our victim? Our victim is ourselves. It is so common for many of us to criticize ourselves too harshly, regularly speak negatively about ourselves, both within our minds and out loud. We will even beat ourselves up about every little mistake or mishap, terrorizing ourselves. Sometimes we are our own worst enemy, and Jesus has said to love your enemies (Matt 5:44).

How can we transform this internal bully into an ally? The world has placed several challenges around us that help to fuel our hidden bully, such as stress and other worldly distractions. So, we need to train our minds as Christians so that those internal, hidden conversations we have with ourselves are just as Christ-like as the words we verbalize. Let us train our minds with the Bible and learn from God's teachings. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom 12:1–2). It is God's will that we find peace with Him (Rom 5:1). We will struggle plenty from the world around us, but let's find peace with Him within ourselves. Replace that inner bully, if he exists, with the Lord and His voice and make peace within yourself. "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom 12:18).

(DJ Curry– Minister Camden Clark Church of Christ)

AREA EVENTS UPCOMING

November 8, Lubeck Men's Day, Doug Pell, 9:00am- 2:00pm Lubeck Church of Christ RSVP-@www.lubeckcoc.org or call 304-863-6504

January 23-24, 2026; Ohio Winter Lectures: You Can Trust the Bible” 1130 Fishinger Rd. Columbus, OH 43221, 614-451-4886

February 1-5, Freed Hardeman Lectures, Freed Hardeman University 158 East Main St. Henderson TN 38340

February 20-22, Challenge Youth Conference, Pigeon Forge, TN, info@cyconline.com

April 5-8, 2026, Gospel Meeting with Phil Sanders at the church of Christ at Rio Grande.

April 12-15, 2026, Gospel Meeting with Ron Thomas at the New Martinsville Church of Christ

A Christian student at Ohio State University? Be sure to check out **www.buckeyes4christ.com**

WORKS WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION

West Virginia School of Preaching (www.wvsop.com)

Warren Christian Apologetic Center (www.warrenapologetics.org)

Southeast Institute for Biblical Studies (www.makingpreachers.com)

Added to the Church (addedtothechurch.com)

In Search of the Lord's Way (www.searchtv.org)

House to House Heart to Heart (www.housetohouse.com)

Gospel Broadcasting Network (www.gbntv.org)

Each month there is an elders / preachers meeting at the Blackburn Hills Rd. church building (Athens, Ohio), where David Brothers preaches. It's designed for elders and preachers, but others are welcome to attend. Please email Scott or Ron for more info.