



TRUTH ON TOUGH TEXTS

EXPOSITIONS OF CHALLENGING SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

WWW.THESCRPTUREALONE.COM

FROM SOLA SCRIPTURA PUBLICATIONS

ISSUE 113 (July/Aug. 2018)

PERPLEXING PASSAGES (1)

SELECTED TEXTS

THIS ISSUE OF TOTT, WHICH IN AUGUST CELEBRATES THE completion of 13 years of this publication, adds a new category. While most issues over the years have been full articles on a “tough text” or important topic, and others have answered reader questions that were shorter in length, this new category combines both. Each installment of “Perplexing Passages” will examine such passages and verses that don’t require a full length article. In this first installment we will address three such texts.

Where Did Cain Get His Wife?

As the modern expression goes, “Here’s an oldie but a goody,” so we start this new TOTT feature here. This is, in fact, among the most-asked skeptical questions on the Bible. After all, if Adam and Eve were the only two people having children, where could Cain possibly find a wife?

So much does the skeptic love this observation, that it was used as a “devastating” argument in the movie *Contact*, which was based on the novel of the same title by the agnostic astronomer/cosmologist/astrophysicist Carl Sagan. It is distinctly anti-Christian bias is vividly seen (among other times) when a Christian philosopher (played by actor Matthew McConaughey) is asked this question, to which he responds with embarrassed silence, as if it has no explanation. Such was Sagan’s proud assumption. Tragically, in real life, during the famous Scopes trial in 1925, Christian prosecutor William Jennings Bryan failed to answer this question when asked by anti-Christian ACLU lawyer Clarence Darrow.

Countless people, both non-Christian *and* Christian boldly assert that the Bible says, “Cain went into the land of Nod and took himself a wife,” when in point of fact it says no such thing. Here is what it actually says: **Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch (Gen. 4:16–17).** Clearly, then, Cain did not find his wife in **Nod** but rather already had her and took her with him. Interestingly, **Nod** transliterates the Hebrew *nôḏ*, which means “wandering,” indicating that Cain was simply a vagabond. As Adam Clarke notes, “Some think this verse should be ren-

dered, ‘And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, from the east of Eden, and dwelt a vagabond on the earth’; thus the curse pronounced on him (Gen. 4:12) was accomplished.”¹ John Gill even adds that it was not even called **Nod** but was “so called, not before he went there, but from his wandering up and down in it.”² So, where did his wife come from? Obviously, since Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters (Gen. 5:3–4), Cain married one of his sisters.

The skeptic, of course (who in some cases might very well have been waiting for that response and thinks he’s trapped you), now shrieks, “But that’s incest! This means that the Bible condones an immoral, illegal, and dangerous practice!” But, of course, it means nothing of the sort. Why? Because originally incest referred only to sexual relationships between parents and children. Only much later did it refer to other family members. Abraham, for example, married his half-sister (Gen. 20:12) with no indication that God looked upon it unfavorably. God, in fact, blessed this union to produce the Hebrew people through Isaac and Jacob. Amram (Moses’ father) married his aunt (i.e., his father’s sister) Jochebed (Ex. 6:20), which again was not at all out of order.

In those early days of the human race, all this was totally proper for two reasons. First, this was simply the only way to propagate the race. A relative was the only choice for a spouse. Second, and more importantly, there was absolutely no danger of genetic damage. Because Adam and Eve were created perfect, there was not even the minutest genetic flaw. When sin entered the world, however, so did the consequence of decay (Rom. 8:22). But this decay took many generations to develop. The second generation of Cain, Abel, and their siblings, came from zero genetic flaw, so genetic effects were minute at worst. Siblings, therefore, could marry without any potential damage. By the time of Moses, however, thousands of years had passed and sin had done its damage with genetic flaws building up over the millennia. It was now time to forbid the marriage of siblings and other close family members (Lev. 18–20). Besides with the now vast population, there was not reason for the former.

The Longest Day

In 1962, the epic movie masterpiece, *The Longest Day*, was

released. Based on Cornelius Ryan's 1959 book of the same title, it is a mammoth recreation of the D-Day landings at Normandy on June 6, 1944. It was the German Field Marshall Erwin Rommel who actually coined the phrase "The Longest Day" on April 22. Addressing his commanding officers at the Atlantic Wall in Normandy, he said, "Not one soldier of the Allies will ever reach the shore. This invasion, gentlemen, wherever and whenever it may come, there!—right at the water's edge—right there I will break it up! Believe me, gentlemen, the first twenty-four hours of the invasion will be decisive! For the Allies, but also for the Germans, it will be the longest day." While he was certainly correct that those first 24 hours involved the largest manned invasion ever assembled and was matched against a firmly entrenched German front, he was very wrong, of course, about the outcome.

Long before that, however, there was another "longest day" that was, in fact, longer than 24 hours. Our text here is **Joshua 10:12-14**:

Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.

There have been several "explanations" of this event. Some, for example, say that this was simply a solar eclipse, which kept the sun's heat from Joshua's exhausted troops and provided them coolness for battle. Others assume this was just local refraction of the sun's rays much like the local darkness in Egypt (Ex. 10:21-23). Still another skeptical conjecture views the language as simply describing an observational point of view; in other words, it only *seemed* to Joshua's men that the sun and moon stopped as God helped them accomplish in one 24-hour day what would normally take much longer. Still others view all this as just poetry, not a literal event at all. It is especially troubling to me that one evangelical source goes to great length on this and concludes:

In a sense . . . this is not "Joshua's long day" but rather "Joshua's long night." . . . The best solution is this. Joshua prayed early in the morning, while the moon was in the western sky and the sun was in the east, that God would intervene on their behalf. God answered Joshua and sent a hailstorm. This had the effect of prolonging darkness and shielding the men from the searing rays of the summer sun. The sun therefore was "silenced" in the middle of the sky, and the moon did not "hasten to come."³

I would respectfully submit that that not only *minimizes* the miracle, but it also *mangles* the language, changing the emphasis of the text from "day" to "night." Such explanations, in fact, do not do justice to the text and casts a shadow over God's power as Creator.

I would further submit, then, that a miracle *explained* is a miracle *eradicated*. The best way to view this passage is simply how it reads: God stopped the earth's rotation for the necessary period of time. This is supported first by the description. The word **still** translates the Hebrew *dāmam*, "to be silent, to be still, to stand still." It's used elsewhere to describe motionless (1 Sa. 14:9; Jer. 47:6). It's also used to picture people being traumatized and frozen "as a stone" from fear (Ex. 15:16). This is supported secondly by the mention of **the book of Jasher**. This is a Hebrew literary collection of songs written to honor the accomplishments of Israel's leaders, such as David's "lament of the bow" as "it is written in the book of Jasher" (2 Sam. 1:17-27). While the skeptic insists that such an event would be cataclysmic, causing monstrous tidal waves and such, could not the Creator of the universe easily prevent such ramifications?

Another aspect of this incident that seems to be overlooked by many is that the Amorites (a Canaanite people) worshipped, among other deities, the sun and the moon. Such an overruling of their gods would have been terrifying. Indeed, **the LORD fought for Israel**, and He did so using a staggering miracle. So, as Spurgeon wonderfully summarizes:

To please skeptical minds, scores of explanations of this wonderful occurrence have been laboriously elaborated, but there is no need for them and no use in them. The almighty God can as easily stop the sun and moon as a watchmaker can alter a watch; He did do so, and how he did it is no question for us: we may be rest assured He prolonged the daylight by the very wisest means. It is not ours to try and soften down miracles, but to glorify God in them.⁴

The Curse on Canaan

Among the most horrendous conclusions that some have come to as a result of poor interpretation of Scripture is the idea that "the curse on Canaan included the black race." This was, in fact, the foundation for the justification of slavery. But this is patently false. Genesis 10:6 lists Ham's sons: *Cush* was basically Ethiopia but was also "scattered over the whole of Southern Asia, and originally, in all probability, settled in Arabia, where the tribes that still remained, mingled with Shemites, and adopted a Shemitic language"⁵; *Mizraim* is a name by which Egypt is frequently called in Scripture; *Phut* is one of the North African countries, such as Libya; and *Canaan* is the land of Palestine/Canaan. So, all this is not about "Blacks" or "Africans," rather it is about the Canaanite people who inhabited the Promised Land.

I believe it is important and appropriate to interject here just how wicked racial prejudice is, *especially for a Christian*. Granted, this is one of the most difficult things in the world to destroy. Among the ancients, for example, Cicero wrote, "As the Greeks say, all men are divided into two classes—Greeks and barbarians." Aristotle spoke of the "remote tribes of barbarians belonging to the bestial class." In other words, non-Greeks were animals. But that is exactly what Christ destroyed by His work on the Cross. Paul explicitly addresses this in Ephesians 2:14-18. If Christ's finished work could destroy the virtually genetic hatred between Jew and Gentile, reducing all the barriers to rubble, it could destroy *anything!*

Besides, if I may also interject, there is only *one* race on this planet, *the human race*; God “made of one blood all nations of men” (Acts 17:26). Everything else is simply a matter of skin pigmentation and other genetic factors. Skin color, for example, simply depends mostly on the amount of melanin that is present. A small amount of melanin results in lighter skin color, a lot of melanin results in very dark black skin, and there are other shades in between. Or how about the difference in eye shape between the Caucasian and the Oriental? This is simply because the Asian’s almond shape eye has more fat around the eye. There are, of course, other issues, such as interbreeding, but what is unambiguous is that mankind, as originally created, was designed to be one, but it was sin that brought about the colossal changes we know. Further, sin destroyed any possibility of unity outside of God’s intervention. And His ultimate intervention was the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian, no matter what so-called “race,” is part of the One Body of Christ.

So, what was the curse on Canaan and why did it come, according to **Genesis 9:20–25**? While wine was considered one of God’s gifts (Ps. 104:15), was used as a libation at both the burnt offering and peace offering (Num. 15:5–10), and was a fixture at festivals (Deut. 14:26), the warnings against abuse and drunkenness abound (Prov. 21:17; 23:20–21, 29–35; Is. 5:22). Such was the case with Noah. Having drunk too much wine, he not only became drunk, but because of the excess body heat generated by the alcohol, he kicked off his covering and exposed himself, which was especially shameful (Lam. 4:21; Hab. 2:15; cf. Ex. 20:26).

Entering his father’s tent and discovering him in that condition, Ham’s reaction was reprehensible, although what exactly he did has been greatly debated. A common view is that he committed a homosexual act, but that cannot possibly be correct. The words **saw the nakedness of his father** are unmistakable. The Hebrew behind **saw** is *rā’āh*, and means what it says: to see with the eyes (cf. 27:1). If a sexual act were meant, the Hebrew would indicate this with the translation “he uncovered [causative form of *gālāh*] his father’s nakedness.” As the text clearly says, Noah had already uncovered himself and Ham simply saw him that way.

A bizarre view from some rabbis was that Ham, in a struggle for family power, actually castrated his father to prevent other sons from being born. But not only does the language not support this, but the idea seems to have originated in Phoenician and Greek myths about intergenerational conflict in which a son castrated his father or ruler.

Equally bizarre is the view that says in light of a comparison with Leviticus 18:6–8 and 20:11, the phrase **saw the nakedness of his father** is a euphemism for having sex with his wife! But that makes no sense whatsoever. For one thing, it fails to account for the fact that Shem and Japheth walked into the room backward and covered Noah with a garment; Noah was clearly alone in this shameful state. For another, would Ham have actually gone out and told his brothers that he had had sex with his (and their!) mother?

So, what did Ham do? Just what the text indicates. Just as his brothers **took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father’s nakedness**, that is what Ham

should have done but did not. Instead, he mocked his father by telling his brothers what he’d seen. “So what?” we might ask. “What’s the big deal?” Well, this was, in fact, a *huge* deal in that ancient culture—even *seeing* one’s father naked was an unspeakable breach of family ethic. The position and strength of the father was made a dishonorable mockery, which in-turn destroyed the sanctity and reputation of the family. Ham disregarded all this and obviously demonstrated his own moral weakness and wicked character.

So, since Ham was the guilty one, why was the curse placed on his son Canaan? The only explanation that makes sense is that since Noah’s declaration in verses 25–27 demonstrate that the character of his three sons would be perpetuated in their descendants, Noah clearly saw what was to come in Ham’s descendants. In fact, since Ham’s son Canaan was obviously an adult, indicating that this incident occurred approximately 20 years after the flood, Noah’s curse was a prophetic announcement that the wickedness of Canaan and his descendants would be even worse than Ham’s.

This is further confirmed by Leviticus 18:3–19, where Moses used the causative form of the verb *gālāh* we noted earlier to refer to the Canaanites’ (Ham’s descendants) “uncovering” another’s nakedness, that is, depraved and deviant sexual relations. This euphemism unambiguously recounts the actual reprehensible, reprobate, and repulsively immoral behavior of Ham’s descendants. As one writer puts it, “Almost everywhere the archeologist’s spade has dug in that part of the world, there have been fertility symbols accompanying texts explicit enough to make many a modern pornographic dealer seem a mere beginner in the trade of deviant sexual behavior.”⁶ Astonishingly, “even the Romans, so depraved in their own practices, were shocked by the behavior of the Phoenicians at the colony of Carthage (the last vestige of the Canaanite race)”⁷ during the Punic Wars (264 BC—146 BC).

This curse upon Canaan, in fact, a curse that would result in its eventual annihilation, prepares us for our next issue of TOTT, “God’s Judgment on the Canaanites” (Deut. 20:16–18), in which we will address one of the harshest criticisms leveled by skeptics against the biblical record, and even God Himself, namely, the wholesale slaughter of the Canaanite civilizations to the last man, woman and child.

Dr. J. D. Watson

Pastor-Teacher, Grace Bible Church

Director, Sola Scriptura Publications, a ministry of GBC

NOTES

¹ Adam Clarke’s *Commentary on the Bible* (public domain), comment on Gen. 4:16.

² John Gill’s *Exposition of the Entire Bible* (public domain), comment on Gen. 4:16.

³ Walter Kaiser, Peter Davids, F. F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, one-volume edition, 1996), 187–88.

⁴ *Spurgeon’s Devotional Bible* (Baker, 1974).

⁵ Keil & Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament* (public domain), comment on Gen. 10:6–20.

⁶ Walter Kaiser, et. al. *Hard Sayings*, 117–18.

⁷ *Ibid*, 118.

AN EXCERPT FROM:

SEEK HIM EARLY: DAILY DEVOTIONAL STUDIES ON KNOWING, LOVING, AND SERVING OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Among the many thrilling studies Pastor Watson has undertaken in his years of ministry—the most notable have been Ephesians, Psalm 119, and the Doctrines of Grace—Hebrews 11 is also a favorite. It is because of the impact this chapter has had on his own life and ministry, a significant portion of the final section of his *Seek Him Early* devotional book is dedicated to it.

OCTOBER 26

Joshua: The Prize-Winning of Faith (1)

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. (Heb. 11:30)

TWO short verses in Hebrews 11 briefly mention two historical incidents but amazingly link the two seemingly contradictory champions involved: one a godly leader of Israel but the other a pagan harlot. From both, however, we learn the same lesson: the prize-winning of faith, that victory comes only when we obey the Word of God.

The book of Joshua is a record of the conquest of the land of Canaan and its later division among the tribes of Israel. The land was at that time inhabited by the Canaanites, a collection of various wicked and pagan peoples who were the descendants of Ham's son Canaan. God commanded His people to go in and simply take what He had given them. How significant it is that they are battling the Arab nations to this day! We look first, then, at Joshua.

First, the requirement: "The LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour" (Josh. 6:2). Jericho ("Place of Fragrance") is the oldest city in the world; according to most archeologists, it dates to 5000–4000 BC (some even say 8000). At 846 feet below sea level, it is also the lowest city on earth. It was extremely significant in Joshua's day (1500–1400 BC), being the most important city in the Jordan valley (Num. 22:1; Num 34:15), a strategic juncture for caravans traveling east and west, and the strongest fortress in all of Canaan. Behind its massive walls, and with access to fresh water and storehouses of food, the citizens could rest with confidence.

With that backdrop, God told Joshua He would simply give this city into his hands—it was actually already his, in fact ("have given"). This was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that He would give him and his descendants everything south to north from the Nile River in Egypt to Lebanon and everything west to east from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River (Gen. 15:18; Josh. 1:4). It was not the result of military might, brilliant strategy, or diplomatic negotiation. It came by God's power alone. All He demanded from His people at Jericho was a few symbolic acts and faith in His promise of the result.

As we have noted several times, but what still bears constant repetition, this is faith: the *supreme confidence* in what God says and *settled conviction* that it will come to pass. "How weak soever the believer finds himself, and how powerful soever he perceives his enemy to be," wrote Puritan David Dickson, "it is all one to him, he hath no more to do but to put faith on work, and to wait till God works."¹ That is what faith *pronounces*, and it is, as we will see in Joshua, what the godly believer *practices*.

Scriptures for Study: How do the following verses encourage us: 1 Corinthians 2:5; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5?

OCTOBER 27

Joshua: The Prize-Winning of Faith (2)

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. (Heb. 11:30)

WE have mentioned various Puritans several times on this magnificent topic of faith, for they understood it well. "Faith is the oil that feeds the lamp of hope," wrote Thomas Watson. He then added, "Faith and hope are two turtle-dove graces; take away one, and the other languishes."² Joshua understood that principle long before Watson did.

Second, the response. As we read the entire account (Josh. 6:1–20), we observe at least three aspects of Joshua's response.

(1) His *reasoning*. Joshua was a military man, and any military man, regardless of his rank, would look at this proposed "strategy" in horrified disbelief. It is easy to conceive that someone was thinking, "Let me get this straight. This is a double wall 30 feet high. The outer wall is six feet thick, the inner wall is 12 feet thick, there's a rubble-filled space between them of about 15 feet, they are linked together on top by houses, and all we're going to do is march around them and they will fall down. Brilliant!"

(2) His *realization*. While the human reasoning noted above would be the natural reaction, there is no suggestion whatso-

¹ I. D. E Thomas (Ed.), *A Puritan Golden Treasury* (Banner of Truth, 1975, 1989), 103.

² *The Sermons of Thomas Watson* (Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1990, first published in 1829), 401.

ever that anyone reacted that way. There is not the slightest hint of doubt, hesitation, or objection. As verses 6 and 7 indicate, Joshua obeyed God immediately and without question. This underscores a critical principle for us: nothing could be wiser than just doing what God says, regardless of how strange it might seem from the human perspective.

(3) His *recognition*. We would submit that there is a deeper meaning behind God’s purpose in Jericho: the destruction of man’s pride on both sides of the conflict. Not only was the pride of the people in Jericho shattered right along with their walls, but any pride the Israelites might have had in the victory was also crushed because their “battle” was only symbolic—the victory belonged to God alone. Likewise, let us *never* take *any* credit or glory for any work we do for God. It is not we who accomplish the work, rather it is God working through us.

Third, the *result* of Joshua’s faith, of course, was overwhelming victory. While critics have scoffed at the possibility of marching around a city seven times in one day, Jericho was comparatively small, having a circumference of 656 yards and dimensions of 246 by 87 yards.³ Also, since the city sits on a hill, the wall fell outward, dragging the inner wall and houses with it, the rubble thinning out as it went down the slope, thus enabling the Israelites to maneuver their way easily into the city.

Oh, the victory that is ours if we do things according to God’s Word!

Scriptures for Study: Read the entire account of the battle at Jericho in Joshua 6. What observations can you make, and what strikes you the most profoundly?

Seek Him Early: Daily Devotional Studies on Knowing, Loving, and Serving Our Lord Jesus Christ

This daily devotional truly comes from the depths of Pastor Watson’s heart. Endorsed by Phil Johnson, Joel Beeke, Todd Friel, and many others, it’s divided into the three distinct parts specified in the sub-title (each encompassing four months of devotional/theological studies). The reader is first encouraged to know the Lord in a personal way, then to love Him like never before, and finally to be driven to more passionately serve Him. Each daily reading is 450–500 words in length, meaty, theological, and homiletical. Each day also includes a “Scriptures for Study” section, which lists other related verses for you to explore and lends itself to personal journaling. See samples (and other available books) at <http://SolaScripturaPublications.blogspot.com/>. [Single Copy, \$15.00; 2–3 copies, \$14.00 ea.; 4–5 copies, \$13.00; 6+, \$12.00 ea. Also available on Amazon.com and for Kindle Reader.]

Seek Him Early Podcast

Based on the above book, a new episode is posted every Monday on our website, iTunes, Google Play, and Stitcher.

Ephesians Exposition: The Christian’s Wealth and Walk

All 171 messages in MP3 format from Pastor Watson’s 3-1/3 year exposition of this wondrous epistle. We also hope to publish the two-volume exposition later this year.

SOLA SCRIPTURA PUBLICATIONS

Order Form

P.O. Box 235
 Meeker, CO 81641
 970-878-3228
 970-618-8375
dwatson@thescripturealone.com

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____
Email (optional) _____

Qty.	Title	Price	Total
1	We Preach Christ: The Bible Story	FREE	FREE ⁴
Sub-Total			
<i>Entirely Optional Shipping Donation</i>			
TOTAL			\$

³ Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua, New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1981), 109. Woudstra gives the measurements in meters: “600 meters and dimension of 225 by 80 meters.”

⁴ One FREE copy with any order of at least one other book title. Additional copies may be purchased for \$2.00 each.

SEEK HIM EARLY PODCAST

AT

WWW.THESCRPTUREALONE.COM

TRUTH ON TOUGH TEXTS

A Ministry of
Grace Bible Church
P.O. Box 235
Meeker, CO 81641
www.TheScriptureAlone.com
dwatson@thescripturealone.com
A F.I.R.E. Church
www.FireFellowship.org

This monthly publication is intended to address Scriptures that have historically been debated, are particularly difficult to understand, or have generated questions among Believers. We hope it will be an encouragement and challenge to God's people to carefully examine and discern Truth. While the positions presented here are based on years of careful biblical research, we recognize that other respected men of God differ.

If you have a question that perplexes you, please send it along so we might address it either in a full length article or in a "Reader Questions" issue. Other comments are also warmly welcomed, and letters to the editor will be published.

This publication is sent free of charge to anyone who requests it. To aid in the ministry, donations will be greatly appreciated, but never demanded. If you know someone you think would enjoy TOTT, please send along their address.