

Yesterday I started answering a question about whether the problems in the Hebrew Bible were as significant as those in the New Testament, and my response was: Yes! Even more so! In yesterday's post I talked about the problem with the manuscripts. In this post I'll talk about internal discrepancies and contradictions. Rather than write the whole thing out, though, I've decided just to include a chunk that deals with the issue from my Introduction to the Bible, as I did once before, many years ago on the blog. In the context of my discussion in the book, am talking about what 19th and 20th century critical scholars discovered with respect to discrepancies within the Pentateuch, leading to the theory that the first five books of the Hebrew Scripture actually derived from four major sources, written at different times, that have been spliced together, creating internal problems.

The internal tensions came to be seen as particularly significant. Nowhere were these tensions more evident than in the opening accounts of the very first book of the Pentateuch, in the creation stories of Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Scholars came to recognize that what is said in Genesis 1 cannot be easily (or at all) reconciled with what is said in Genesis 2. These do not appear to be two complementary accounts of how the creation took place; they appear to be two accounts that are at odds with each other in fundamental and striking ways. Read them carefully yourself. Make a list of what happens in chapter one, then a list of what happens in chapter 2, and compare your lists. Among other things you will notice the following:

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