



Does God change his mind? Skeptics and critics have claimed the Bible contradicts itself on this matter.

Alleged contradiction:

Does God change his mind?

(a) Yes. "The word of the Lord came to Samuel: "I repent that I have made Saul King..." (I Samuel 15:11)

(b) No. God "will not lie or repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent" (I Samuel 15:29)

(c) Yes. "And the Lord repented that he had made Saul King over Israel" (I Samuel 15:35).

Notice that

the above three quotes are all from the same chapter of the same book! In addition, the Bible shows that

God repented on several other occasions:

i. "The Lord was sorry that he made man" ([Genesis 6:6](#))

"I am sorry that I have made them" ([Genesis 6:7](#))

ii. "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people" ([Exodus 32:14](#)).

iii. (Lots of other such references).

ANALYSIS OF CLAIMS

Some older translations, such as the King James Version, render the Hebrew “na·cham” as “repent”, which could be understood as indicating that God made a mistake. However, the Hebrew “na·cham” is used in the sense of “feeling regret,” not of God making any mistakes.

Let’s look at how the scriptures that are alleged above to show that God makes mistakes, are accurately translated:

“The word of Yahweh came to Samuel, ‘I regret having made Saul king, since he has broken his allegiance to me and not carried out my orders’” (1 Samuel 15:10,11 NJB). “Yahweh regretted having made Saul king of Israel” (2 Samuel 15:35 NJB). This is not a change of mind. Yahweh’s regret, is a regret that Saul chose to rebel against God.

“Samuel said to him, ‘Today Yahweh has the kingdom away from you and given not to a neighbor of yours who is better than you. The Glory of Israel, however, does not lie or go back on his word’” (1 Samuel 15:28,29 NJB). God is faithful to his word. Once King Saul became firmly set in badness, God decided to remove him as king and would not change his decision, no matter what, at that point.

“Yahweh regretted having made human beings on earth and was grieved at heart. and Yahweh said, ‘ . . . I regret having made them’” (Genesis 6:6,7 NJB). Yahweh God here *“was expressing sorrow for what the people had done to themselves, as a parent might express sorrow over a rebellious child. God was sorry that the people chose sin and instead of a relationship with him”* (Life Application Study Bible note on Genesis 6:6-7).

“Yahweh then relented over the disaster which he had intended to inflict on his people” (Exodus 32:14 NJB).

GOD HIMSELF DOESN'T CHANGE, BUT CAN CHANGE HIS MIND

The Bible is very clear that God himself does not change. **“I. Yahweh, do not change” (Malachi 3:6 NJB)**. On the other hand, he does, on occasion, change his mind for very good reasons.

“This word came from the LORD ‘ . . . ‘It may be they will listen, all of them, and will turn from their evil way, that I may change my mind about the disaster that I intend to bring on them because of their evil doings’”. “Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and *the LORD will change his mind* about the disaster that he has pronounced against you.” (Jeremiah 25:3,13 NRSV). A change in humans conduct can, at times, bring about a change of God’s minds these scriptures indicate.

“When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it” (Jonah 3:10 NRSV). God had Jonah preach to the wicked people of Ninevah that he would destroy them all in 40 days. However, when they all turned away from evil, God change his mind about destroying them.

“For Yahweh Sabaoth says this, ‘Just as I resolved to ill-treat you when your ancestors provoked me to anger and did not relent—says Yahweh Sabaoth—so now I have changed my mind and intend to treat Jerusalem and the house of Judah well.Do not be afraid!’” (Zechariah 8:14,15 NJB). God resolved to punish his chosen people for their covenant breaking, and carried it out without changing his mind. Once that punishment was completed, Yahweh changed his mind about the way he dealt with the people of Judah, and had them returned to their homeland in peace and security.

GOD IS FAITHFUL AND TRUSTWORTHY

Of course, just because God *can* change his mind does not mean that he *must* change it. Consider some situations where the Bible says that God has *not* changed his mind, nor will he:

“God is no human being that he should lie, no child of Adam to change his mind. Is it his to say and not to do, is it his to speak and not fulfill?” (Numbers 23:19 NJB).

God did not allow Balak to make him change his mind and curse the nation of Israel.

“The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 10:4 NRSV). God will fulfill his promise to make his Son a priest forever. God will not change His mind.

God is faithful to all his promises, and is not wishy-washy, as many humans are. At times, God has changed his mind—for good reason! However, accurate Bible translations and understanding, help us to see that the Bible does not contradict itself about this matter.