

Both the Old and New Testament continually affirm that God is truthful and does not lie or tempt others to sin. However, there are some passages that appear to contradict these affirmations.

Consider the story of Rahab hiding the spies and lying to the king of Jericho about their whereabouts. Joshua and the writers of Hebrews and James all commend Rahab for her actions.

There is also the story in Exodus of the midwives lying to Pharaoh about the Israelite women giving birth and being blessed by God for doing so.

And in Judges Jael promises safety and rest to Sisera, the general of King Jabin's Canaanite army, but killed him while he slept and later received praise for it.

These have not only been cited by critics as proof the Bible is inconsistent in its condemnation of dishonesty and lying; Christian commentators have also found them difficult to reconcile with other clear teaching in Scripture.

To offer an explanation, some have argued that Rahab's lying is not condoned at all. They say she was commended and spared because of her faith in the God of Israel, which, emerging out of a wicked culture, was still in a transformation process.

While this argument may support the above cases, there are other incidents where the Lord is clearly pictured as the one instigating and authorizing the deception.

In First Samuel, God showed Samuel how to mislead Saul and say that he had come to offer a sacrifice and not to anoint a new king from the house of Jesse.

In the same book, David lied to the priest Ahimelech claiming he was on a mission for the king to get provisions for himself and his men. What followed led to a partial fulfilment of the word the Lord spoke earlier against the house of Eli in Shiloh.

In First Kings, God inspired a Prophet to deceive Ahab about his true identity to force him into confessing his error. The Lord also asks for someone to entice Ahab to war and then gives permission to a spirit to deceive him and all his prophets.