

The Anvil Rings

VOLUME 1



ANSWERS TO ALLEGED BIBLE DISCREPANCIES

Eric Lyons

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Eric Lyons

Apologetics Press, Inc.
230 Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117-2752

First Edition 2003
Second Edition 2022

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ISBN-10: 0-932859-49-6
ISBN-13: 978-0-932859-49-5

Printed in USA

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NOTE: All bold text in Scripture quotations has been added by the author for emphasis.

THE ANVIL

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
 Then looking, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.
 “How many anvils have you had,” said I,
 “To wear and batter all these hammers so?”
“Just one,” said he, and then with twinkling eye;
 “The anvil wears the hammers out, ye know.”
And so, thought I, the anvil of God's Word,
 For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard
 The anvil is unharmed...the hammers gone.

John Clifford (1836-1923)

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PREFACE

His preacher described him as a “solid Christian.” He was a young, dedicated follower of Christ who was enthusiastic about living for Jesus. From the time he was a young boy, his grandmother had taken him to worship God on the first day of every week. After becoming a Christian he had, according to his preacher, “attended every service of the church.” He grew in the faith and began taking part in leading the congregation in prayer. Later, he personally taught the congregation by occasionally standing before the church and reading the Bible to them aloud, at times even delivering short lessons. Before leaving for the university an hour from his hometown, the young 18-year-old from West Virginia was considered by those who knew him best to be a devout Christian with impressive potential—one whose shield of faith would stand strong when worldliness attacked and whose Christian foundation would remain firm when shaken by the devil’s doctrines.

Sadly, only a short time passed before this young man lost his faith. He went to college as a believer in the God of the Bible and came home an “enlightened” skeptic. One of the first classes he took at the university was an elective course on world religions. Initially, he thought he could handle whatever questions came his way about Christianity. He had memorized numerous verses in the Bible. He could tell people about salvation through Jesus Christ. He knew about the uniqueness of Jesus’ Church. It took, however, little time for one teacher in one class in one university to turn this “solid Christian” into an unbeliever.

What led to the demise of this young man’s belief in God and the Bible as His Word? Why did the young man’s faith crumble so easily? It all began with his inability to handle the “factual discrepancies” that his new-found friends had convinced him were in the Bible. When asked to explain to his teacher and fellow classmates how hundreds of “Bible contradictions” were not contradictions at all, but simply misunderstandings on man’s part, he would not...because he could not. After being bombarded with hundreds of questions that he was incapable of answering, he eventually began denying the truths he once believed. Not long after this young man’s “transformation,” he gave one of his childhood mentors (the preacher of the church where he was reared) a document titled “Factual Discrepancies.” This document (of which we have a copy) contains nearly 70 alleged “factual” contradictions that supposedly are found in the Bible. Because this frustrated young man from West Virginia (who had been taught the Bible his entire life) was unable to answer these allegations, he gave up on

the God of the Bible. His faith in the inerrant, inspired Word of God was replaced with the vacuousness of a skeptic's uncertainty—all because he was unable to defend the Truth against the frequent attacks leveled against it by infidelity.

I wonder how many times this true story could be rehearsed by people all over the world? How many parents, grandparents, Gospel teachers and preachers have seen their “work” (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15) destroyed at the hands of infidels? How many young college students leave home as “solid” Christians and return four years later as “enlightened” skeptics?

The Anvil Rings volumes 1-3 are dedicated to answering numerous alleged Bible contradictions, many of which were presented to the young West Virginian at the university he attended. It may be that you have never considered some of the questions these volumes seek to answer. Other questions, you will find, have been around for some time, but perhaps you have never heard them answered.

So far as ease of response is concerned, the questions and alleged discrepancies fall into various categories. Certain charges against God's Word are explained rather easily. Others require attention and research. It is a simple matter for the atheist, agnostic, or skeptic to charge the Bible writers with making all manner of mistakes; it is not always a simple matter for the Bible believer to respond to such claims. But, regardless of the ease or difficulty, it is our hope that you will see how the many “factual” discrepancies can be answered—logically and truthfully.

Chapter 1



UNDERSTANDING THE REAL NATURE OF A CONTRADICTION

Through the centuries, people have attempted to justify their rejection of the inspiration of the Bible for a number of different reasons. Some have assumed that the Bible is uninspired ever since their parents taught them as children that it was merely a product of ancient man. Others have never read the Bible nor studied any of the proofs for its divine origin. Their chosen road of disbelief may stem more from indifference than anything else. Some have rejected the Bible because most of the professed adherents that they know act ungodly, divisively, or hypocritically. Others simply have no desire to live according to the will of God and do not want to be told by Jesus, His apostles, or the prophets what to do. These individuals refuse to believe because, if they did,

they might feel compelled to give up their pleasurable immoral activities.

Perhaps the most frequently cited reason in the 21st-century why individuals reject the Bible's claim of inspiration is because of presumed discrepancies in Scripture. It is alleged that the Bible writers made various mistakes in their writings, often contradicting either what another biblical penman wrote or some known historical, geographical, or scientific fact. A plethora of "Bible Contradiction" books, websites, and videos have been published in recent years. For example, in his book *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy*, Dennis McKinsey stated:

Every analyst of the Bible should realize that the Book is a veritable miasma of contradictions, inconsistencies, inaccuracies, poor science, bad math, inaccurate geography, immoralities, degenerate heroes, false prophecies, boring repetitions, childish superstitions, silly miracles, and dry-as-dust discourse. But contradictions remain the most obvious, the most potent, the most easily proven, and the most common problem to plague the Book.¹

In the introduction to his popular website, *The Skeptic's Annotated Bible*, Steve Wells wrote that "contradictions and false prophecies show that the Bible is not inerrant.... It is time for us all to stop believing in, or pretending to believe in, a book that is so unworthy of belief."² In his book *godless*, popular American atheist Dan Barker argued: "People who are free of theological bias notice that the bible contains hundreds of discrepancies."³

For example, allegedly since Matthew wrote that "the robbers" (plural) reviled Jesus on the cross (Matthew 27:44), while Luke wrote that "one of the criminals"

blasphemed Jesus (Luke 23:39), either Matthew or Luke was mistaken.⁴ Supposedly, since Jesus said, “Do not judge” in Matthew 7:1, but then later gave instructions for judging false prophets (Matthew 7:15-20), Jesus was contradictory.⁵ And, since Jesus claimed that Zechariah was the “son of Berechiah” (Matthew 23:35), while the chronicler referred to “Zechariah the son of Jehoiada” (2 Chronicles 24:20), Jesus must have made another mistake.⁶ On and on, one presumed contradiction after another is listed. Page after page of “Bible discrepancies” are published online and in print.

It might surprise some to learn that, although skeptics are widely known for their frequent use of the term “contradiction” in their insistence that the Bible writers made mistakes, Christian apologists are more than happy to discuss “contradictions,” and specifically, what a contradiction actually is. As with any meaningful discussion, we cannot have rational dialogue about “contradictions” unless the term first is defined and understood.

The Law of Contradiction is one of the most fundamental principles of logic. In fact, the great fourth century B.C. Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote in his renowned philosophical work, *Metaphysics*, that this principle is “the most certain principle of all.”⁷ It is a principle “which every one must have who understands anything that is...and that which every one must know who knows anything.”⁸ What is the Law of Contradiction? It is, as Aristotle noted, “that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect.”⁹ In other words, if the same thing is said to be and not be (1) for the same person, place, or thing, (2) at the same time, and (3) in the same sense (or

respect), then a genuine contradiction exists. For example, it is impossible for the same glass of water to be completely empty and completely full at the same time and in the same sense. However, if one of the three aforementioned variables is untrue or is unknown, a person cannot logically contend that a contradiction exists. Can we be sure that we are talking about the same glass of water at the same time and in the same sense? If so, then there is a contradiction. If not, then no contradiction exists. If the variables are unknown, then it cannot be proven that a contradiction exists, and the Bible writers are innocent until proven guilty (a principle that we expound upon in volume 2, chapter 1).

Consider the Law of Contradiction in light of two different statements: (1) “Ricky Smith is rich,” and (2) “Ricky Smith is poor.” Do these statements contradict each other? Many would be tempted immediately to say, “Of course.” However, without knowing for certain that the statements are made about the same person, we cannot reasonably claim that they contradict each other. It could be that the first statement is made about a rich Ricky Smith in Oklahoma, while the second statement is about a different, poor Ricky Smith who lives in New York. When comparing two statements, we must make sure that the same person, place, or thing is under consideration.

But what if we are talking about the same Ricky Smith? Would the statements “Ricky Smith is rich” and “Ricky Smith is poor” then be contradictory? Not necessarily. It may be that two different periods of time are under discussion. Ricky Smith could have been extremely poor as a child and could have continued to struggle in poverty

into his early 20s. However, after working his way up in a large company over a period of 20 years, Ricky Smith could have become very wealthy by the time he was 40. Thus, if the two statements about Ricky refer to two different times in his life, they certainly are not contradictory.

What's more, it is very possible that the same Ricky Smith could be rich and poor, even at the same time, if the terms "rich" and "poor" are used in different senses. Ricky Smith could be a billionaire, but if he is not a Christian, he is spiritually poor. On the other hand, Ricky Smith could be materially poor, yet be "in Christ" with "every spiritual blessing" (Ephesians 1:3) and thus be spiritually rich. ("Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith"—James 2:5?) Unless the terms are used in the same sense, then Ricky Smith could certainly be "rich" **and** "poor" at the same time.

When the term "contradiction" is clearly defined and understood, then both Bible students and skeptics should quickly see that so-called "contradictions" are merely legitimate differences that do not demand a verdict of "contradiction." Different people, places, and things may be discussed. Different times may be under consideration. Or, words and statements may be used in different senses. Consider these three principles in light of various alleged problems in Scripture.

IS THE SAME *PERSON, PLACE, OR THING* BEING CONSIDERED?

Acts 12:2 vs. Acts 15:13

According to Acts 12:1-2, "Herod the king stretched

out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.” Only three chapters later, however, Luke recorded that James was alive and well at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:13ff.)—an event that took place well after the death of James. How could both Acts 12 and Acts 15 be correct? How could James be dead and alive at the same time? The simple (and hopefully obvious) explanation is that Acts 12:2 and Acts 15:13 are referring to two different men—both of whom were named James. The James who lost his life at the hands of King Herod was the apostle, the brother of John (Acts 12:2), the son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21). The James of Acts 15 was the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:19; Matthew 13:55; Acts 12:17). The name James appears 42 times in the New Testament, referring to four different men—the two mentioned above as well as James the son of Alphaeus (Luke 6:15) and James the father of Judas (Luke 6:16). As with any person in Scripture, careful attention must be given to whom a particular writing is referring.

John 3:13 vs. 2 Kings 2:11

The example of James in the book of Acts is rather elementary. At other times in Scripture, the reference to a particular person, place, or thing may be less certain, and more likely to be criticized. For example, in John 3:13 the apostle John recorded Jesus as having said to Nicodemus, “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man” (John 3:13). According to skeptics, this statement is severely flawed. Since the Old Testament reveals that Elijah escaped physical death and “went up by

a whirlwind **into heaven**” (2 Kings 2:11),¹⁰ allegedly Jesus could not truthfully tell Nicodemus, “No one has ascended to heaven.”

For Jesus’ statement to contradict what the Bible says about Elijah, one first must assume that Jesus was referring to the exact same **place** to which Elijah ascended. Can the skeptic be certain that the “heaven” to which Jesus referred, is the same one into which the body of Elijah ascended? The words “heaven” or “heavens” appear in our English Bibles about 700 times. And yet, in many of the passages where “heaven(s)” is found, the inspired writers were not discussing the spiritual heaven with which we most often associate the word. For example, in Genesis 1 and 2, the Hebrew word for “heaven” appears 15 times in 14 verses. Yet in every instance, the word is referring to something besides the spiritual heaven where God dwells. The word “heaven” (Hebrew *shamayim*; Greek *ouranos*) is used by Bible writers in basically three different ways. It is used to refer to the atmospheric heavens in which the airplanes fly, the birds soar, and the clouds gather.¹¹ “Heaven(s)” also is used in the Bible when referring to the firmament where we find the Sun, Moon, and stars—the sidereal heavens, or outer space.¹² The third “heaven” frequently mentioned in Scripture is the spiritual heaven in which Jehovah dwells, and where, after Judgment, the faithful will live eternally.¹³

Furthermore, the “heavenly” spirit realm not only includes the throne room of God, but also “Paradise” and “torments”—the two divisions of the hadean realm where the disembodied spirits of all people who have previously lived on Earth await for the Lord’s return and judgment.¹⁴

John clearly indicates that the eternal Jesus (John 1:1-5) came down from where God dwells. The passage in 2 Kings 2:11, however, is not as clear. The writer of 2 Kings easily could have meant that the body of Elijah miraculously ascended up high into the air never to be seen by anyone on Earth again. Or 2 Kings 2:11 could mean that Elijah went into “heaven,” meaning that part of the spirit realm known as Paradise. Nowhere does the text indicate that Elijah left Earth immediately to dwell in God’s presence. He definitely went somewhere, but we have no evidence that he was transferred to the actual throne room of God Almighty—from whence Jesus came to Earth.

Indeed, John 3:13 and 2 Kings 2:11 are referring to two different places. Thus, there is no contradiction between the two passages.¹⁵

Matthew 23:35 vs. 2 Chronicles 24:20

Consider one more example where the “same person, place, or thing” principle is quite important to remember. In Matthew 23:35, Jesus referred to the Jews murdering “Zechariah, the son of Berechiah... between the temple and the altar.” Skeptics such as Dennis McKinsey have argued that this Zechariah “is actually the son of Jehoiada as is shown by 2 Chron. 24:20.... The name Barachias or Barachiah is not in the Old Testament.”¹⁶ The fact is, however, it cannot be proven that Jesus was referring to “Zechariah the son of Jehoiada” (2 Chronicles 24:20) in his reprimand of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:35. A reasonable case can be made that Jesus was referring to one of at least three different people.

First, it may be that Jesus was referring to Zechariah the minor prophet, who preached during the days of Ezra (Ezra 5:1), some 400 years after Zechariah, son of Jehoiada. In fact, contrary to McKinsey's comment that "the name Barachias or Barachiah is not in the Old Testament," Zechariah, the minor prophet, actually **is** called "the son of **Berechiah** [spelled Barachias in the Septuagint], the son of Iddo" (Zechariah 1:1; cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14). Although the Old Testament writers did not record his death, Jesus, the Son of God, would have known how he died, and it also could have been known through Jewish tradition. [NOTE: One must keep in mind that the Old Testament is not the only source for New Testament data concerning what took place from Creation until the coming of Christ. The New Testament writers were inspired by God (cf. 2 Peter 3:16; 1 Corinthians 14:37; John 16:13). How did Paul know that "**Jannes** and **Jambres** resisted Moses" (2 Timothy 3:8) when the names of Pharaoh's magicians are not given in the Old Testament? How did Jude know that Michael the archangel and the devil "disputed about the body of Moses" (Jude 9) when no Old Testament writer mentioned such an event? Paul and Jude either knew of these facts from tradition and recorded them by inspiration, or God miraculously revealed this information to them. Similarly, in Matthew 23:35 Jesus could have simply been referring to the death of one of the last Old Testament prophets, which was not recorded in the Old Testament, but known by God and perhaps Jewish tradition.]

Second, though many **assume** that Jesus was referring to a martyr named Zechariah from Old Testament times, a closer look at Jesus' comments may reveal otherwise.

He rebuked the Pharisees, saying:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, “If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.” Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them **you will kill and crucify**, and some of them **you will scourge** in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, **whom you murdered** between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation (Matthew 23:29-36).

Notice that Jesus spoke to His first century enemies, saying, “you murdered” Zechariah, son of Berechiah (Matthew 23:35). A straightforward reading of this passage, without assuming that Zechariah was one of the more than two dozen persons who wore the name Zechariah in the Old Testament, may mean that the Pharisees themselves had murdered a righteous man named Zechariah around A.D. 30. Perhaps, as Burton Coffman concluded,

Christ here referred to some secret murder perpetrated, not by the ancestors of those men, but **by them....** Christ tried with that one last lightning

stroke of truth to get through to them, but even that failed. That no such murder was recorded in either the Old Testament or the New Testament, and that there was no general knowledge of it in the days of Christ, and that no traditions were developed with reference to it—these things present no difficulty at all, but point squarely at the Pharisees and show their effectiveness in covering up their evil deeds and hiding them from popular view.... It is further evidence of their depravity that none of them ever confessed it, even after He who knew their thoughts revealed it publicly! Their guilty secret went to the grave with them, except for this ray of light from the lips of Christ who made it known on the occasion of their being sentenced to hell for their wickedness.¹⁷

Third, considering the fact that God's spokesmen occasionally spoke of things yet to come as if they had already occurred (commonly known as "prophetic perfect"; cf. Isaiah 53; 21:1-10), it may be (however unlikely) that Jesus was speaking about the death of a future Zechariah. According to Josephus, about 35 years following Jesus' death, two zealots slew Zacharias the son of Baruch in the middle of the temple simply for being rich, hating wickedness, and loving liberty.¹⁸

Whatever the answer to the question, "To which Zechariah was Jesus referring?," one thing is beyond any doubt: skeptics do not have a shred of evidence that Matthew 23:35 is an uninspired, errant passage. It truly may be that Jesus was referring to an entirely different Zechariah than the one mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24:20. And, as the Law of Contradiction demonstrates, unless it can be proven that the same person is under consideration

in two separate statements, it is unfair and unreasonable to assert that a contradiction exists.

IS THE SAME *PERIOD OF TIME* UNDER CONSIDERATION?

Genesis 1:31 vs. Genesis 6:6

At evilbible.com, a website that purports to “spread the vicious truth about the Bible,”¹⁹ the very first alleged “obvious contradiction” listed involves Genesis 1:31 and Genesis 6:6. Since Genesis 1:31 says, “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good,” and Genesis 6:6 reveals that “the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart,” the Bible is said to be contradictory and untrustworthy. Allegedly, the Lord could not be both satisfied and dissatisfied with His creation. The fact is, however, God could logically be both pleased and displeased with His Creation, **if the statements were referring to two different periods of time**. Most any Bible student knows that, though only four complete chapters separate Genesis 1:31 and 6:6, they are separated—chronologically speaking—by more than a millennium. “In the beginning” God was pleased with His Creation. Several hundred years later, after “the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5), God was **then** “sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (6:6). It is quite telling that such a simple explanation has apparently eluded the minds of some skeptics.

Matthew 27:5 vs. Acts 1:18

Through the years, the description of Judas Iscariot's death has been one of the most popular alleged Bible contradictions cited by critics of biblical inerrancy. It seems as if every skeptical book or website that questions the integrity of the Bible lists Judas' death as one of the most obvious inconsistencies in Scripture. Whereas Matthew recorded that Judas "went and hanged himself" after betraying Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (27:5), Luke recorded that "falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out" (Acts 1:18). Because Matthew only mentioned Judas being hanged, while Luke mentioned Judas falling headlong and bursting open at his midsection, a "real" contradiction supposedly is evident.

The differences in these two accounts are easily (and rationally) explained when we consider that Matthew and Luke were referring to **two different times**. Matthew recorded the **initial** hanging of Judas, while Luke recorded what took place sometime **later** (probably several days later). Soon after Judas took his life, his body would have begun the decomposing process. If a dead body is left to itself (with no attempt to preserve it, e.g., embalming), bacteria soon begin to break down various bodily tissues. As a result, gases are released within the body, which in turn cause it to swell. A few years ago, a news outlet reported how a large sperm whale had beached itself on the shores of Taiwan and died. While on its way to being transported through a Taiwanese city to a particular research center, the swollen, unpunctured mammal literally exploded and soaked pedestrians and motorists in blood and entrails.

According to one Taiwanese scientist, “Because of the natural decomposing process, a lot of gases accumulated, and when the pressure build-up was too great, the whale’s belly exploded.”²⁰ In light of such decomposition, it certainly is not difficult to imagine that Judas’ decaying body, which may have been swelling for a number of days, could have fallen a short distance (from wherever it was hanging), and easily burst open once striking the ground. As Wayne Jackson concluded about Judas in his excellent commentary on Acts: “The language necessitates no conflict. Either he hanged himself from a very high place—with perhaps the rope breaking; or else, no one removed his body for a while, it eventually fell under its own weight, and the decomposing corpse burst open.”²¹ Again, the reason that Matthew 27:5 and Acts 1:18 are not contradictory regarding Judas’ death is because they are not referring to the exact same time—at least the skeptic cannot prove that they are referring to the same time—and thus the charge of contradiction is unfounded and irresponsible.

Different Laws for Different Times

Sometimes when skeptics accuse the Bible writers of contradicting themselves, the answer is as simple as: you are comparing **two different laws** that were in force at **two different times** in history. Just as all those living in North America in A.D. 1600 were not required to follow the United States Constitution and laws passed by the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. government (which obviously came many years later), the Israelites living in 1,000 B.C. must not be judged

by the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2), which came into effect 1,000 years later.

The often overlooked fact (by an increasingly biblically illiterate society) is that the Bible is composed of two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament covers over 3,500 years of human history (from the Creation to the Jews' return to Jerusalem following 70 years of Babylonian captivity) and refers to two major law systems: (1) the Law of Moses (which was given only to the Israelites—and to those Gentiles, called proselytes, who converted to Judaism), and (2) the law that governed all men from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, and only Gentiles (non-Jews) from Adam until the Christian dispensation began. Although the Bible does not give this law a “proper name,” it has become known as “the Patriarchal Law.”²²

The New Testament is “the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2) under which **everyone** (Jews and Gentiles) have lived since Jesus' death on the cross (Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 2:14). This law is universal in scope; it is addressed to “all nations” and is to be obeyed by both Jews and Gentiles (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; cf. Acts 1:8; Acts 17:30).

Jesus perfectly fulfilled the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17), and ever since He died in about A.D. 30, His will (not the Old Law of Moses nor Patriarchal Law) has been in force (Hebrews 9:14-17). Thus, the reason children of God today do not follow, for example, the law of the sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11) is because that law was part of a different law system and for a different time.²³

ARE THE COMPARED WORDS AND PHRASES USED IN THE SAME *SENSE*?

Matthew 27:5-7 vs. Acts 1:18

The description of Judas' death is not the only problem that skeptics have with Acts 1:18. Since Matthew 27:5-7 indicates that the **chief priests** used the betrayal money that Judas threw on the temple floor to purchase the potter's field, critics contend that a contradiction exists because Acts 1:18 reveals that **Judas** purchased the field with the blood money. Obviously, Judas could not have purchased the field because he gave the 30 pieces of silver back to the priests before hanging himself. Thus, to say that Judas bought the potter's field is allegedly contrary to the facts.

If one believes it is wrong to say that a father bought a car for his son, when in actuality the son purchased the car with \$3,000 his father gave him, then Acts 1:18 and Matthew 27:5-7 may be considered contradictory. If one believes that it is deceitful to say an employer purchased a meal for his staff, when, in fact, it was one of the employees who handed the money to the waiter, then the events recorded in Acts 1:18 could be considered fictitious. But fair and reasonable people would not reach such conclusions as these, because most people recognize the truth of the well-known principle: "he who acts through another is deemed in law to do it himself,"²⁴ which is based on the Latin maxim, "*Qui facit per alium, facit per se.*"

In Acts 1:18, the reader is not forced to conclude that Judas **personally** bought the potter's field. Rather, as is seen throughout Scripture, Luke was simply indicating that Judas furnished the **means** of purchasing the field.

(The burden of proof is upon the one alleging the contradiction that Luke could not have been using the term “purchase” in this sense, and such real proof has never been produced.) The Bible writers frequently represented a man as doing a thing when, in fact, he merely supplied the means for doing it. For example, Moses wrote how Joseph spoke of his brothers as selling him **into Egypt** (Genesis 45:4-5; cf. Acts 7:9), when actually they sold him to **the Ishmaelites**—who then sold him into Egypt. John mentioned that “the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (**though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples**)” (John 4:1-2). When the Bible says, “Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him” (John 19:1), most people understand that he would have simply **ordered** Jesus to be scourged, not that he actually did the scourging himself.

Whether one says that Judas “purchased a field with the wages of iniquity” (Acts 1:18), or that the chief priests “bought with them the potter’s field” (Matthew 27:7), he has stated the same truth, only in different ways.

Matthew 23:35 vs. 2 Chronicles 24:20

While considering the different respects in which inspired penmen used words and phrases, it is appropriate to revisit Matthew 23:35 and 2 Chronicles 24:20. Suppose that when Jesus mentioned “Zechariah, son of Berechiah” (Matthew 23:35) that He **was** referring to the Zechariah (called “the son of Jehoiada”) of 2 Chronicles 24:20. Such a reference still would not necessarily be a contradiction for at least two reasons. First, it could very well be that Berechiah and Jehoiada were the same person, but wore different names. In ancient times, people

frequently had more than one name. Moses' father-in-law was known both as Reuel and Jethro (Exodus 2:18; 3:1). Gideon acquired the name Jerubbaal after destroying an altar of Baal (Judges 6:32; 7:1; 8:29,35). In 2 Kings 15, King Jotham's father is called both Azariah (vs. 7) and Uzziah (vs. 32). The names are different, but they refer to the same person (cf. 2 Chronicles 26:1-23; Isaiah 1:1). The apostle Peter is sometimes called Peter, Simon, Simon Peter, and Cephas (Matthew 14:28; 16:16; 17:25; John 1:42; 1 Corinthians 1:12). People have worn multiple names for centuries. In modern times, most people could think of several individuals who are called by various names. (Although most of the time my oldest son answers to his middle name, "Bo," sometimes we call him by his first name "Elijah." At other times, we may summon him by his full name "Elijah Bo Lyons.") Is it not possible that Jehoiada also was known as Berechiah? Certainly! One wonders why Bible critics are so certain that Jesus made a mistake when even they themselves are accustomed to calling others by a variety of names.

It may also be that Jehoiada was Zechariah's grandfather and Berechiah was his father. The term "son" is used in several senses in Scripture. Aside from using it to signify a son by actual birth, Bible writers used it to mean (1) son-in-law (1 Samuel 24:16; cf. 18:27), (2) grandson (Genesis 29:5), (3) descendant (Matthew 1:1), (4) son by creation, as in the case of Adam (Luke 3:38), (5) son by education (i.e., disciple—1 Samuel 3:6), etc. After reading Genesis 29:5, one might think that Laban was the son of Nahor, but Genesis 24 explains that he actually was Nahor's grandson (24:24,29; cf. 22:20-24). Mephibosheth is called the "son of Saul" in 2 Samuel

19:24, when actually he was “the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul” (2 Samuel 9:6; 4:4). Mephibosheth was technically Saul’s grandson, though Scripture refers to him once simply as the “son of Saul.” These are only two examples where the Bible conveys to the reader that the term “son” was used to mean grandson. One can only wonder how many times the term “son” is used this way throughout Scripture, and yet, unlike the examples of Laban and Mephibosheth, were not explained to be grandchildren. Indeed, Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, may be just one such example. Concerning this possibility, commentator R.C.H. Lenski noted:

This is possible when we remember the great age of Jehoiada, 130 years, and when we recall his great deeds, making it highly creditable to be called his son. So in Chronicles Zachariah would be named after his illustrious grandfather but in Matthew after his father, the name of the father having been preserved by Jewish tradition or in genealogical records. The Jews also frequently called a man a son of a mighty grandsire, especially while the latter was still living.²⁵

The fact is, there are several legitimately possible explanations for why Jesus referred to Zechariah as “the son of Berechiah,” and any one of these possibilities justifiably dispels the vacuous charge of contradiction. Simply because we may not know for certain the identity of the Zechariah Jesus mentioned, does not mean we have the right to label Jesus and the Bible writers as contradictory. In truth, the only apparent contradiction regarding this matter lies, not in the Bible, but in Bible critic Dennis McKinsey’s own accusation. On page 30 of his book *Biblical Errancy*, McKinsey insisted that the Zechariah of

Matthew 23:35 “is actually the son of Jehoiada.” However, later in the book (p. 195), he wrote (immediately following a quotation of Matthew 23:35): “The Zecharias mentioned was killed in Jerusalem in 69 C.E.; so that Matthew makes Jesus refer to an event that occurred forty years after his death. This is the same Zecharias Barouchus who, according to Josephus, was slain in the temple a short time before the destruction of Jerusalem.” Indeed, it is the skeptic, not Jesus, Matthew or any other inspired writer, who is proven to be contradictory.

Acts 9:7 vs. Acts 22:9

Consider one final example where the question of “same sense” plays an important role. As Saul journeyed toward Damascus in hopes of persecuting more followers of Jesus Christ, “suddenly a light shone around him from heaven” (Acts 9:3). Saul “fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting’” (9:4-5). Interestingly, Luke, the penmen of Acts, records how those who journeyed with Saul, “stood speechless, **hearing a voice, but seeing no one**” (9:7). Critics of the Bible’s divine inspiration allege, however, that Saul contradicted Luke when he recounted these events in Jerusalem years later. As Saul (whose name by that time had been changed to Paul) gave his defense before the Jewish mob, he mentioned that “those who were with me indeed **saw the light...but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me**” (22:9). Skeptics contend that Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9 are contradictory. After all, how could Saul’s companions hear but not hear, and see but not see?

The fact is, whether skeptics want to admit it or not, people regularly (and honestly) talk of “seeing” and “not seeing,” as well as “hearing” and “not hearing”—even in reference to the same things at the same time. The justifiable difference, however, is in the **sense** in which the words are used. A man with rather poor vision and without glasses may not be able to “see anything.” But the same man with the same blurry vision may technically be able to “see something.” He can see light and darkness. He can see the blue sky. He can see fuzzy figures. He might even be able to read a document held close to his eyes. But could he make out a person’s face from 15 feet away? Could he effectively work as a night watchman? Could he safely drive a car? Certainly not with, say, 20/80 vision. Thus, in one sense the man can “see,” while in another sense “he’s blind.” Likewise, those accompanying Saul to Damascus “saw the light” (Acts 22:9), but they saw “no one” (9:7).

But what about Luke’s and Saul’s different details regarding what the men **heard**? Did they stand speechless, “hearing (*akouo*) a voice” (9:7) as Luke recorded, or did they “not hear (*akouo*) the voice of Him who spoke,” as Paul informed the Jerusalem mob in Acts 22:9? If it could be proven that the Bible writers never used words figuratively and/or in different senses, then skeptics would certainly have a valid criticism. But as we’ve already seen, and as could be pointed out throughout Scripture (e.g., two different uses of the word “day” in one verse in Genesis–1:5), the Bible writers (and those whom they quoted) often used words in a variety of ways—just as mankind has for millennia. A husband may “hear” **everything** his wife says, but really not “hear” **anything**

she says. A distracted high school student can “hear” everything his algebra teacher has taught during a given class period. But how will he answer his mother that evening when she sees him struggling with simple algebra equations and asks, “Did you not hear anything your teacher said today?” In a strictly literal sense, he could say, “I heard every word my teacher said.” However, in an appropriate, but figurative sense, he could say, “I didn’t hear anything she said.”

Interestingly, Jesus once spoke of those who, “seeing (*blepo*) they do not see (*blepo*), and hearing (*akouo*) they do not hear (*akouo*), nor do they understand (*suniemí*)” (Matthew 13:13). To whom was Jesus referring? Those individuals who could literally see and hear Him, but who did not **understand** Him—they did not see and hear Him in the deeper, more meaningful way that He desired. Of particular interest is the fact that Jesus used the Greek terms for seeing and hearing **in different senses**. If Jesus could use these words differently, pray tell, what would keep Luke and Saul from using them thusly?

Regarding Acts 9:7 and 22:9, Saul’s men obviously heard something (a sound of some kind),²⁶ yet they did not hear (i.e., understand) the voice of the Lord as did Saul. What fair and just jury could not easily come to this same conclusion were Luke and Saul put on trial for their differences in the accounts of Jesus appearing to Saul and his men on the road to Damascus?

CONCLUSION

Sometimes statements people make differ because they are contradictory. The fact is, nothing can both be and not be for the same person, place, or thing, at the

same time, and in the same sense. At the same time, differences do not necessarily mean that various accounts are discrepant. In fact, it is irresponsible and unreasonable to interpret legitimately explained differences as contradictions.

People generally understand that differences can abound in various accounts without a person needing to resort to charges of discrepancies. However, when it comes to the Bible, many people leave behind reason and fair-mindedness. To them, different accounts **must** be “contradictory.” Different wordings by different writers **must** mean someone was “wrong.” Though unproven and unprovable assertions in nearly every other area of life are quickly exposed as baseless allegations, when it comes to the Bible, differences are often thought to equal discrepancies.

In reality, the different but truthful wordings in Scripture are exactly what a person should expect to find in a book composed of 66 smaller books written by approximately 40 different writers, who wrote to different people, at different times, and in different places with different purposes. Furthermore, the differences in Scripture are parallel to the justifiable differences we expect from each other’s accounts in modern times.

The fact is, if the apostles and prophets wrote independently of each other, differences should be expected. However, the differences are not demonstrated discrepancies. They are only “contradictions” in the minds of those who reject the Law of Contradiction and the fundamental principles discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2



ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS IN THE CREATION ACCOUNT

WHEN WERE THE SUN, MOON, AND STARS CREATED?

Genesis 1:1-5,14-19

In 2009, one of America's most influential agnostics, Bart Ehrman, penned a *New York Times* bestseller titled, *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them)*. Only a few pages into the book, Ehrman let his problems with Genesis 1-2 be known. One of his chief issues was with days one and four of Creation.

[I]f "light" was created on the first day of creation in Genesis 1, how is it that the sun, moon, and stars

were not created until the fourth day? Where was the light coming from, if not the sun, moon, and stars? And how could there be an “evening and morning” on each of the first three days if there was no sun?¹

Even many Christians seem so puzzled by these questions² that they play unnecessary and illogical word games with the sacred text. For example, some have alleged that the “sun, moon and stars were created ‘in the beginning’ (Gen. 1:1),”³ rather than on day four of Creation. Supposedly,

[O]n the fourth day, God “set” the sun, moon and stars in the heavens to govern the days, months, seasons and years (verse 17). When God “set” the lights in the heavens, it was much like when we “set” a clock. And that really is what God did—He “set” His clock on the 4th day. **But these (the sun, moon, stars) were all created “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1).**⁴

Certainly, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), but it was not until later that God created the Sun, Moon, and stars. Genesis 1:14-19 reads:

Then God said, “**Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens** to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so. Then **God made two great lights**: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made **the stars also**. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule

over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were **the fourth day.**

God not only “set” (Hebrew *nathan*) the Sun, Moon, and stars in their precise locations in the heavens on the fourth day of Creation, but it was on this day when God literally “made” (Hebrew *asah*) these heavenly bodies. Similar to how God initially made the land and seas void of animal life (which later was created on days five and six of Creation), the “heavens” were made “in the beginning,” but the hosts of heaven (which now inhabit them) were created “in the firmament of the heavens” on day four (Genesis 1:14).

Similar to how God spoke light into existence on day one of Creation, saying, “Let there be light” (1:3), on the fourth day God declared, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens?...and it was so” (1:14-15). On day one God made some form of intrinsic light; on day four He made the generators of light.

Keep in mind that the omnipotent “Father of lights” (James 1:17), Who **is** “light” (1 John 1:5), could create light easily without first having to create the Sun, Moon, and stars. Just as God could produce a fruit-bearing tree on day three without a seed, He could produce light supernaturally on day one without the “usual” light bearers (which subsequently were created on day four). Furthermore, this special, miraculously made light on day one could have provided both light and heat for the Earth and all the plant life on Earth created on day three. If mankind can design and manufacture various things to produce light (such as light bulbs

and glow sticks), surely the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator would not have a difficult time making some form of light (and heat) without the Sun.

Interestingly, in the symbolic word-picture that John painted in Revelation 21 and 22 of the destiny of God's redeemed, he noted how "[t]he city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it." "They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light." "[F]or the glory of God illuminated it." In fact, "The Lamb is its light" (Revelation 21:23; 22:5).

Christians no more have to be concerned with how there could have been light without a Sun on days one, two, and three of Creation than we have to be concerned about how there could be light in the afterlife without the Sun, electricity, or lightbulbs. Almighty God can create and sustain light apart from normal light generators.

Still, Bart Ehrman and others question how there could have been regular days, with evenings and mornings, before the Sun, if the Sun was not created until day four. Answer: Considering that some places on Earth today have regular 24-hour days during particular times of the year without ever seeing the Sun, it surely would not have been a problem for God to ensure regular days during the first three days of Creation without the Sun.

Some people today live in areas of the world, such as northern Alaska, where, in January, it's dark (at least fairly dark) 24 hours a day because the Sun is never visible. On the other hand, in the month of June, the Sun is always visible. Do the people of Alaska still have 24-hour days during those times of the year? Most certainly, because days with evenings and mornings are determined by the

rotation of the Earth on its axis and not whether the Sun is or is not seen.

We can be confident that on day one of Creation God made a rotating Earth, as well as some form of light that came from a certain direction—“on one side of the earth.” Is there a lot about this light that we do not know? Sure. But there’s nothing contradictory in Genesis 1 or the rest of the Bible about what God created on days one and four. Nothing warrants any other conclusion than that God created everything in six days, including some form of light on day one, followed by the Sun, Moon, and stars on day four.

TOO MUCH ACTIVITY ON DAY SIX?

Genesis 2:18-20

One reason infidelic scoffers reject the validity of the biblical account of Creation is that they find it impossible to believe that one man could name every single species of animal on the Earth in a single day. Considering that there are only 86,400 seconds in a 24-hour period, we are told it is ludicrous to believe that an individual (who had never seen animals before the day he named them) could name several million species of animals in one day. Perhaps over a period of a few weeks he might accomplish such a task, but certainly not in a single day—right?

The problem with such objections to Genesis 2:18-20 is that they are based on assumptions. The question that skeptics often ask, “Could Adam have gathered and named all of the animals on the Earth in one day?,” is misleading because the Bible places certain

restrictions on the animals Adam named. Consider the following.

- Adam’s task did not include searching for and gathering all of God’s creatures. Rather, God “brought them” to him (Genesis 2:19). Likely this was in some sort of orderly fashion in order to reduce the amount of time and human energy necessary to complete the process.
- Genesis 2:20 does not say that Adam named “all” of the animals on the Earth. The text actually says, “Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field.” Excluded from this naming process were sea creatures and creeping things mentioned earlier in the creation narrative (Genesis 1:21,25).
- The beasts God brought to Adam are qualified by the descriptive phrase “of the field” (*hassadeh*). Although the precise limits of the term “field” are difficult to determine, it is possible that it refers only to those beasts living in Eden.
- If the beasts of the field were limited to those animals within the boundaries of Eden, then livestock and birds could have been similarly limited. This would greatly reduce the number of animals involved in the naming process, since it is very unlikely that all created animals lived in Eden. (If so, Eden would have been quickly overrun and destroyed.)
- Contrary to popular belief, Adam did not name millions of **species** of animals on day six.⁵ Genesis 1 states that the animals were created “according to their kind(s)” (vs. 21), not species. The Bible was written long before man invented the Linnaean classification system. The “kinds” (Hebrew *min*) of animals Adam named on the sixth day of creation were probably very broad—more like groups of birds and land animals rather than specific genera and

species. Adam would have given animals general names like “turtle,” “dog,” or “elephant,” not special names like “pig-nosed soft-shell turtle” or “Alaskan Husky.”

All of these textual considerations suggest that the events of day six could have been accomplished easily within a 24-hour period. Adam did not have to spend a great deal of time pondering what he would call each animal; he was created with the ability to speak and reason. If my oldest son, when he was two years old, could look at a book and call the names of sixty different **kinds** of animals in sixty seconds, I have no problem believing that Adam, having been created directly by the hand of God and made in His image,⁶ had the ability to name hundreds (if not thousands) of birds and land animals in 3,600 seconds (just one hour!).⁷

*NOTE: Some Bible believers may answer the question regarding the length of day six by simply saying, “We don’t know how long the days of creation were. They could have been long periods of time, thus giving Adam all the time he needed to name the animals.” However, the available evidence (**of which the skeptic is very aware**) reveals several reasons why we can know that the days mentioned in Genesis 1 are the same kind of days we experience in the present age, and were not eons of time. The Bible states that the heavens, the Earth, the sea and **all** that is in them were created in six days (Exodus 20:8-11; 31:17; Genesis 1). Genesis 1:5 even states that each of these days was a period of “evening” and “morning” so that there would be no doubt as to the length of each of the creation days. [The words “morning” (*boqer*) and “evening” (*ereb*) appear over 300 times in the Old Testament. Again and again

throughout the Old Testament these words are used in reference to specific, defined portions of regular 24-hour days. The only instances where evening and morning **may** not refer to defined portions of a 24-hour day are the relatively few times they are used in **prophetic** or **figurative language** (e.g., Genesis 49:27; Habakkuk 1:8). Otherwise, the evidence is overwhelming: when “morning” and/or “evening” are used in reference to a period of time (in literal, non-prophetic language) they always refer to regular, 24-hour days (or parts thereof.)] Additionally, we are told in Genesis 1:14 that the lights in the heavens were “for signs and seasons, and for days and years.” If the days that are described by “evening” and “morning” were long epochs of time, then what were the “years”? Indeed, God could have created the Universe in any amount of time He chose. The point is, however, He said He did it in six days, not six long periods of time (cf. Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 10:6; Romans 1:20-21).

DID GOD CREATE ANIMALS OR MAN FIRST?

Genesis 1:24-27; 2:18-19

The amount of time it took Adam to name the animals God brought to him on day six is not the only problem that skeptics have with this particular day of creation. While Genesis 1:24-27 plainly indicates that man was created **after** the animals, it is claimed that Genesis 2:18-19 teaches that man was created **before** animals. They strongly assert that such language by the author of Genesis proves that the Bible is not divinely inspired.

Does Genesis two present a different creation order than Genesis one? Is there a reasonable explanation for the differences between the two chapters, or is this to be recognized as a genuine contradiction?

Some Bible students resolve this alleged contradiction simply by explaining that the Hebrew verb translated “formed” could easily have been translated “had formed.” In his *Exposition of Genesis*, Herbert Leupold stated:

Without any emphasis on the sequence of acts the account here records the making of the various creatures and the bringing of them to man. That in reality they had been made prior to the creation of man is so entirely apparent from chapter one as not to require explanation. But the reminder that God had “molded” them makes obvious His power to bring them to man and so is quite appropriately mentioned here. **It would not, in our estimation, be wrong to translate *yatsar* as a pluperfect in this instance: “He had molded.”** The insistence of the critics upon a plain past is partly the result of the attempt to make chapters one and two clash at as many points as possible.⁸

Hebrew scholar Victor Hamilton agreed with Leupold’s assessment of Genesis 2:19 as he also recognized that “it is possible to translate formed as ‘had formed.’”⁹ Keil and Delitzsch stated in the first volume of their highly regarded Old Testament commentary that “our modern style of expressing the same thought [which the Holy Spirit via Moses intended to communicate—EL] would be simply this: ‘God brought to Adam the beasts which He **had** formed.’”¹⁰ Adding even more credence to this interpretation is the fact that the New International Version renders the verb in verse 19, not as simple past

tense, but as a pluperfect: “Now the Lord God **had formed** out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air.” Although Genesis chapters one and two agree even when *yatsar* is translated simply “formed” (as we will notice in the remainder of this section), it is important to note that the four Hebrew scholars mentioned above and the translators of the NIV all believe that it **could** (or should) be rendered “had formed.” As Leupold acknowledged, those who deny this possibility do so (at least partly) because of their insistence on making the two chapters disagree.

The main reason that skeptics do not see harmony in the events recorded in the first two chapters of the Bible (especially regarding the order of God’s creation—whether vegetation, birds, land animals, man, etc.) is because they fail to realize that **Genesis 1 and 2 serve different purposes**. Chapter one (including 2:1-4) focuses on the **order** of the creation events; chapter two (actually 2:5-25) simply provides more detailed information about some of the events mentioned in chapter one. Chapter two was never meant to be a regurgitation of chapter one, but instead serves its own unique purpose: to develop in detail the more important features of the creation account, especially the creation of man and his surroundings. As Kenneth Kitchen noted in his book, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*:

Genesis 1 mentions the creation of man as the last of a series, and without any details, whereas in Genesis 2 man is the center of interest and more specific details are given about him and his setting. Failure to recognize the complementary nature of the subject-distinction between a skeleton outline of

all creation on the one hand, and the concentration in detail on man and his immediate environment on the other, borders on obscurantism.¹¹

Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe summarized some of the differences in Genesis 1-2 in the following chart:¹²

GENESIS 1	GENESIS 2
Chronological order	Topical order
Outline	Details
Creating animals	Naming animals

The fact is, “Genesis 2 does not present a creation account at all but presupposes the completion of God’s work of creation as set forth in chapter 1. . . [C]hapter 2 is built on the foundation of chapter 1 and represents no different tradition than the first chapter or discrepant account of the order of creation.”¹³ In short, Genesis chapters one and two are harmonious in every way. What may seem as a contradiction at first glance is essentially a more detailed account of chapter one. The text of Genesis 2:19 says nothing about the relative origins of man and beast in terms of chronology, but merely suggests that the animals were formed before being brought to man.

If one still rejects both the possibility of *yatsar* being translated “had formed,” and the explanation of the two chapters being worded differently because of the purposes they serve, a final response to the skeptic’s allegations is that the text never says that there were no animals created

on the sixth day of creation **after** Adam. Although it is **very unlikely** that God created a special group of animals to be named by Adam (after creating all others before the creation of man—Genesis 1:20-27), some commentators hold this view. After his comments concerning the translation of *yatsar*, Victor Hamilton indicated that the creatures mentioned in 2:19 refer “to the creation of **a special group** of animals brought before Adam for naming.”¹⁴ Hamilton believes that most all the animals on the Earth were created before Adam; however, those mentioned in 2:19 were created on day six after Adam for the purpose of being named. In U. Cassuto’s comments on Genesis 2 regarding the time Adam named the animals, he stated: “Of all the species of beasts and flying creatures that had been created and had spread over the face of the earth and the firmament of the heavens, the Lord God now formed particular specimens for the purpose of presenting them all before man in the midst of the Garden.”¹⁵ Both of these long-time Bible students recognize that the text never says there were no animals created after Adam, but that all animals were created on days five and six (before and possibly even after Adam was created). However unorthodox (and unlikely) this position may be, it does serve as another reason why skeptics have no foundation upon which to stand when they assert that a contradiction exists between 1:24-27 and 2:19.

OF WATER OR OF LAND?

Genesis 1:20-22; 2:19

In what appears to be skeptics “grasping for straws,” another criticism of the Creation account centers on Genesis 1:20-22 and 2:19. Allegedly, 1:20-22 teaches that birds

were formed out of the **water**, whereas 2:19 teaches that they were formed out of the **ground**.

The simple fact of the matter is that those who claim such a contradiction exists have misquoted the text and/or misunderstood its wording. We readily admit that Genesis 2:19 teaches that “[o]ut of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air.” However, contrary to skeptics’ accusations, Genesis 1:20-22 does not contradict this statement. Rather, it reads:

Then God said, “Let the waters abound (swarm, ASV) with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.” So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. . . And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”

Where does this passage say that birds were formed from the water? It does not. It simply teaches that God caused some living creatures to appear in the water, and He caused birds to fly above the Earth. This passage does not teach that the waters were the **cause** of the fish, but the **element** of the fish, just as the air is the element of the birds.¹⁶

IS MARRIAGE A GOOD THING?

Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 7:1,7-8,26

Generally, marriage is looked upon by the world around us as a good and honorable institution. Since the commencement of time, the universal law has been that

marriage is proper and beneficial. On the very day God created the first man, He stated: “It is not good that man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18); thus He created a wife for Adam (2:21-24). Everything God created and examined up until this point had been “good” (1:4,10,21,25). The one thing He stated as being “not good,” however, was man’s lack of human companionship. Thus, God created the woman to be man’s helper and lifelong companion. It was only after her creation (at the end of the six days) that we read for the first time His creation was “very good” (1:31).

Although other biblical passages confirm that “[m]arriage is honorable among all” (Hebrews 13:4), and that “[h]e who finds a wife finds a good thing” (Proverbs 18:22), some have questioned the reliability of the creation account in light of Paul’s assessment of marriage in his first letter to the Corinthian church. In this epistle he wrote the following:

- “It is good for a man not to touch a woman” (7:1).
- “I wish that all men were even as I myself” [i.e., not married] (7:7).
- “I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am” (7:8).
- “[I]t is good for a man to remain as he is” (7:26).

Allegedly, Paul’s analysis of marriage is in opposition to the view found in the creation account. Whereas God said, “It is **not** good that man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18), Paul told the Corinthian church that “it **is** good” to remain single. Can these two views of marriage be reconciled, or is this a legitimate contradiction?

As is often the case, the verses in 1 Corinthians only present a problem because the context of chapter 7 has been overlooked. The reader must understand that Paul is responding to questions he received in a letter from the Corinthians (7:1). Obviously, some of the questions pertained to marriage and whether or not the apostle deemed it advisable. What many people overlook is that the questions were asked, and Paul's responses were given, in light of "the present distress" that the Corinthians were facing. Likely, the church at Corinth had asked him whether or not it was proper for a Christian to marry in their present circumstances. In 7:26, Paul wrote: "I suppose therefore that this is good **because of the present distress**—that it is good for a man to remain as he is [single]." Exactly what "the present distress" was at this time is unknown, but it likely involved oppression and persecution at the hands of the Romans (possibly Emperor Nero).

Whatever the precise "distress" was in Corinth, it is clear that God inspired Paul to write that it was in their best interest to remain unmarried. Perhaps he wanted to spare them situations like someone telling them they must either deny Christ or see a family member put to death (cf. Jeremiah 16:1-4). Even today, if a person is aware that severe persecution is imminent, he likely will delay getting married and having children. When Jesus spoke about the "great distress" that would come upon Jerusalem, He specifically warned "those who are pregnant" and "those who are nursing babies" (Luke 21:23). Jesus informed them that they would have greater difficulties surviving "the edge of the sword" that would come upon Jerusalem (Luke 21:24; cf. Matthew 24:19-21). Similarly, Paul advised those in

Corinth to remain unmarried “because of the present distress” (1 Corinthians 7:26).

The Bible teaching on marriage is clear to the unbiased reader: marriage “is honorable among all” (Hebrews 13:4), and since the beginning it normally has been “good” for mankind (Genesis 2:18). In some cases, however, it might become inadvisable. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul simply mentioned one such case.

DID ADAM AND EVE KNOW OF GOOD AND EVIL PRIOR TO SINNING?

Genesis 3:5,22

It was only after Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that the Bible says they came “to know good and evil” (Genesis 3:5,22). Some question how God could punish them for an evil action if they did not know what evil really was? Or did they?

Consider a hypothetical situation: What if two godly parents living in the most wicked city in the world chose never to let their children out of their house. They gave them everything they needed for survival inside the house. They filled their home with only that which is good. Their children never saw evil on television, heard of it on the radio, nor read of it in books. The children could play in any room in the house and open any door, **except** they had been forbidden to open the one front door that leads to “Sodom and Gomorrah.” Do these children know what they can do and cannot do? Yes. Have they seen, witnessed, or experienced the evil outside their house (and compared that evil to the good within their own house)? No. Everything in their house

was good. They had the freedom to do any number of things within their own house. They were forbidden to do one thing: open the front door. Did they know they were not supposed to open the front door? Yes. But did they **know** of the evil on the other side? No. They had never seen it, heard it, thought it, or experienced it.

The term “know” (Hebrew *yada*, Greek *ginosko*) or one of its derivatives (i.e., knew, known, etc.) is used in Scripture in a variety of ways. Several times it is used in reference to a man and woman having sexual intercourse (Genesis 4:1,17,25; Judges 11:39; 19:25). Jesus used the term to refer to His regard for His sheep (i.e., people—John 10:27). In contrast to the way of the wicked that will perish, the psalmist wrote that God “knows” (i.e., approves, takes delight in, etc.) the way of the righteous (Psalm 1:6). Paul used the term “know” in Ephesians 3:19 in the sense of knowing “experimentally what intellectually is beyond our powers of knowing”—the love of Christ.¹⁷ The fact is, like so many words in Scripture (and in modern times) the word “know” has a variety of meanings.

When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden everything was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). They had the freedom to eat “of every tree of the garden” (2:16), but were forbidden to eat of the fruit of one of them (2:17). They **knew** of God’s good creation and they **knew** that if they ate of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (the one forbidden tree), God said they would die (3:2-3). However, it was not until after they ate of the forbidden tree that they had actually “known” (**experienced**) evil. Thus, in one sense Adam and Eve did know the difference between right and wrong, good and evil

(they knew what they could and could not do), but they did not know of good and evil experientially until after their disobedience.

WHY DIDN'T ADAM DIE IMMEDIATELY?

Genesis 2:16-17; 5:5

In the Garden of Eden, the Lord gave a single, solemn prohibition to man. God commanded Adam saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, **for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die**” (Genesis 2:16-17). The tree of the knowledge of good and evil that stood in the midst of the Garden was off limits to Adam and Eve. God prophesied that disobedience on their part would bring death “in the day” it was eaten. However, the Genesis text does not reveal an instantaneous, physical death on the part of the first sinners. Adam lived a total of 930 years (Genesis 5:5), and the text indicates that most of those occurred **after** the transgression in the garden of Eden. Is such consistent with Genesis 2:16-17? Was God mistaken in saying, “in the day that you eat of it [the fruit] you shall surely die”? Why is it that Adam did not drop dead the very day he ate of the forbidden fruit?

For Genesis 2:17 to represent a legitimate contradiction, one first would have to assume that the phrase “**in the day**..you shall surely die” must refer to an **immediate** death occurring on the very day a certain transgression has taken place. The available evidence shows, however, that the Hebrew idiom *b^ayôm* (“in the

day”) refers to the **certainty** of death, not the **immediacy** of it. For example, King Solomon once warned a subversive Shimei: “For it shall be, **on the day** (*b^ayôm*) you go out and cross the Brook Kidron, know for certain you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your own head” (1 Kings 2:37). As the next few verses indicate, Shimei could not have been executed on the exact day he crossed the Brook Kidron. Solomon did not call for him until after Shimei had saddled his donkey, went to king Achish at Gath, sought and retrieved his slaves, and returned home (approximately a 50-60 mile round trip). It is logical to conclude that this would have taken more than just one day (especially considering a donkey’s average journey was only about 20 miles a day).¹⁸ It was only after Shimei’s return from Gath that King Solomon reminded him of his promise saying, “Did I not make you swear by the Lord, and warn you, saying, ‘Know for certain that **on the day** you go out and travel anywhere, you shall surely die?’” (1 Kings 2:42). Solomon understood that even though he executed Shimei sometime after the day he crossed Brook Kidron, it still was proper to refer to it as occurring “on the day.” As Hebrew scholar Victor Hamilton noted, this phrase (in Genesis 2:17; 1 Kings 2:37,42; and Exodus 10:28ff) “is underscoring the certainty of death, not its chronology.”¹⁹ Thus, it is logical to conclude that when God said, “in the day...you shall surely die,” He did not mean Adam would die on the exact day of his transgression, but that his death would be **certain** if he ate of the forbidden fruit.

A second problem with the skeptic’s assertion that Genesis 2:17 contradicts 5:5 is that it assumes the “death”

mentioned in 2:17 is a physical death. The Bible, however, describes three different kinds of “deaths”: (1) a physical death that ends our life on Earth (Genesis 35:18); (2) a spiritual death, which is separation from God (Isaiah 59:1-2; Ephesians 2:1); and (3) an eternal death in hell (Revelation 21:8). The fact is, one cannot know for sure what death is indicated by the phrase, “for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die.” Realizing that Adam sinned against the Almighty in the garden, and thus became “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1; cf. 1 Timothy 5:6), it is more than possible that the death spoken of in Genesis 2:17 is a spiritual death. If this is the case, the reason Adam did not **physically** drop dead on the very day of his transgression was because God’s prophecy was referring to a **spiritual** death, and not a physical one.

There is, however, a third possible explanation, which Garry Brantley well-articulated several years ago.²⁰ He argued:

On several occasions, God reversed His previously-stated will regarding specific circumstances.²¹ Compelled by His mercy, God occasionally suspended His judgment, suffering long with His rebellious creation. Such a possibility was the case with Adam and Eve. If this interpretation of Genesis 2:17 is correct, God did not require them to pay the full penalty for their transgression, but set in motion a redemptive plan in which He accepted a substitutionary sacrifice for sin.... In Adam and Eve’s case, it might be that the animals from which God made the skins to clothe their naked bodies represented the first sin offering.²² At any rate, the punishment articulated for Adam and Eve’s sin has

implications in a broader theological spectrum. The punishment for Adam's sin (and that of all humankind) was paid by Jesus; the price Jesus paid involved a physical, violent death; thus the punishment for Adam's sin (and all humankind) involved a physical, violent death.

When Adam chose to follow his own desires instead of God's will, he cut himself off from God. Without a doubt, man perished spiritually on that day. But, equally certain is the fact that God's punishment for that sin involved physical death—a death that, for Adam, would occur centuries later. Furthermore, when Adam and Eve sinned, “God set in motion the redemptive plan that eventually demanded His own Son's incarnate death.”²³ Truly, Adam and Eve's sin resulted in three “deaths.” Exactly which death God meant for us to understand in Genesis 2:17 is uncertain, and thus a dogmatic stance is inappropriate.

[NOTE: One might be curious as to how the term “day” (Hebrew *yom*) in Genesis 2:17 and 1 Kings 2:37 could possibly refer to something more than a literal 24-hour period, if it could not be interpreted thusly in reference to the days of Creation in Genesis 1. The fact is, the Hebrew word for “day” has several different meanings. It can refer to that which is opposite of night (Genesis 1:5); it can refer to a period of time in the future, such as the “day of judgment” (1 John 4:17) or “the day” Shimei would die (1 Kings 2:37,42); it is used in Genesis 2:4 to refer to the **total** of the six days of Creation; and it can mean a literal 24 hours. One key to defining this word, as well as all words, is to look at it within its context. The usage of “day” (*yom*)

in regard to the days of Creation demands a 24-hour interpretation. The usage of “day” (*yom*) in Genesis 2:17 is less clear and could mean “a period of time in the future.”]

WHAT ABOUT THE LAND OF NOD?

Genesis 4:16-17

After Cain killed Abel and was declared a “fugitive and a vagabond” by God (Genesis 4:12), the Bible says that he “went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod” (4:16). It was in this land that “Cain knew his wife” (4:17), and it was here that his son, Enoch, was born.

When a person reads about Nod in Genesis 4, he often pictures a land where a large group of people already were dwelling by the time Cain arrived. Because the Bible gives this land a name (“Nod”), many assume it was called such before Cain went there. Furthermore, many believe that it was in this land that Cain found his wife. Based upon these assumptions, some even claim that God must have specially created additional humans besides Adam and Eve; otherwise there would not have been a land of Nod, nor would Cain have been able to find a wife there. Are these assumptions and conclusions correct?

It is very likely that when Moses wrote the name “Nod” (Genesis 4:16), he was using a literary device known as “prolepsis” (the assignment of something, such as an event or name, to a time that precedes it). People often use prolepsis for the sake of convenience, so that the reader or audience can better understand what is being communicated. For example, I might say, “My wife and I dated

two years before we got married,” when actually she was not my wife when we were dating, but a very dear friend. We may see a special on television about when President Ronald Reagan was a boy, but the fact is, Ronald Reagan was not President of the United States when he was a boy. From time to time, even the Bible uses this kind of language. In John 11, the Bible speaks of a woman named Mary who “anointed the Lord with fragrant oil” (11:1-2), yet this anointing actually did not occur for about three months. John merely spoke about it as having already happened because when he wrote his gospel account, this event was generally known. Another example of prolepsis is found in Genesis 13:3, where we read that Abraham “went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel.” This area actually did not wear the name Bethel until years later when Jacob gave it that name (Genesis 28:19). However, when Moses wrote of this name hundreds of years later, he was free to use it even when writing about a time before the name actually was given.

When Moses, writing around 1,500 B.C., used the name Nod in Genesis 4, the reader must understand the land probably was not given that name until sometime **after** Cain moved there. This is consistent with the meaning of the name Nod (“wandering”), which in all probability was given because God told Cain he was to be a wanderer upon the Earth (Genesis 4:12). Thus, the land of Nod almost certainly was not an area filled with people whom Cain might eventually befriend. It might have become that in time; nevertheless, it probably was not such a place upon his arrival.

But, someone might ask, did Cain not find his wife in the land of Nod? Actually, the Bible never tells us that

Cain's wife came from Nod. The text simply says that Cain "dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch" (Genesis 4:16-17).

To conclude that God specially created others besides Adam and Eve because "there was a large group of people living in Nod when Cain arrived," and "from this group Cain got his wife," is faulty reasoning. Scripture does not teach the above premises, nor does it ever suggest that God specially created others than Adam and Eve. In fact, the Bible teaches the very opposite when it makes plain that Adam was the first man (1 Corinthians 15:45) and that Eve would be the mother of **all** living (Genesis 3:20).

Chapter 3



ALLEGED PROBLEMS WITH MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP

A few years ago, a young lady from a local university visited our offices at Apologetics Press and requested to speak to someone about a “new theory” she had been taught in her freshman literature class. For the first time in her life, she had been told that Moses could not have been the author of the first five books of the Old Testament.

- *“He lived too early in human history to have written it.”*
- *“The Pentateuch contains information Moses could not have known.”*
- *“Many of the details are from a later age inappropriately inserted into Genesis.”*
- *“The Pentateuch actually was pieced together by anonymous sources (commonly called J, E, D, and P) at a fairly late date—long after Moses’ death.”*

This impressionable young freshman was extremely disturbed by her professor's statements. She was taken aback by the things skeptics and "biblical scholars" had to say about the matter. Consequently, she began to question what she had learned regarding the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch in her Sunday school classes and at the Christian school she had attended nearly all of her life.

- *"Why would I be taught my whole life by teachers and preachers that Moses wrote Genesis through Deuteronomy if he really didn't?"*
- *"Why did I not know about this until now?"*
- *"Does it really matter who wrote Genesis, anyway?"*

THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

The idea that Moses did not write the Pentateuch actually has been around for more than a millennium. However, until the mid-17th century, the vast majority of people still maintained that Moses was its author. It was in the mid-1600s that the Dutch philosopher Benedict Spinoza began to seriously question this widely held belief.¹ French physician Jean Astruc developed the original Documentary Hypothesis in 1753, which went through many different alterations until Karl Graf revised the original hypothesis in the mid-19th century. Julius Wellhausen then restated Graf's Documentary Hypothesis and brought it to light in European and American scholarly circles.² It has become known to many as the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis.

Since the "period of Enlightenment," the Graf-Wellhausen explanation of the origin of the Pentateuch has been thrust consistently into the faces of Christians.

Liberal scholars teach that the Pentateuch was compiled from four original source documents—designated as J, E, D, and P. These four documents supposedly were written at different times by different authors, and eventually were compiled into the Pentateuch by a redactor (editor). The J, or Jehovahist, document (usually known as the Yahwehist document) supposedly was written around 850 B.C. and was characterized by its use of the divine name *Yahweh*. *Elohim* is the divine name that identifies the E, or Elohist, document, purportedly written around 750 B.C. The D, or Deuteronomist, document contained most of the book of Deuteronomy and was supposed to have been written around 620 B.C. The last section to be written was the P, or Priestly, document, which would have contained most of the priestly laws, and allegedly was written around 500 B.C. We are told these documents were then redacted (edited) into one work about 300 years later in 200 B.C.³

It has become increasingly popular to believe this theory. For example, some time ago, we at Apologetics Press received an e-mail “informing” us that “the documentary theory is accepted by almost all scholarly interpreters.” Numerous commentaries, religious journals, and websites promote it, and many professors who teach religious courses espouse it. Undoubtedly, it is champion among topics discussed in classes on a critical introduction to the Bible. In most “scholarly” circles, if one does not hold to the Documentary Hypothesis (or at least some form of it), he is considered fanatical and uneducated. In his book, *The Darwin Wars*, Andrew Brown mentioned an interview he had with the rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in which Dr. Sacks defended the

proposition that Moses wrote (or dictated) the first five books of the Bible. Brown's response was: "That is the most shocking thing I have ever heard an intellectual say."⁴

Why do people today have such a difficult time believing that Moses wrote the Pentateuch? Likely, the principal reason is because students are bombarded with adamant "assurance" statements like the following:

"One of the **certain results** of modern Bible study has been the discovery that the first five books of the Old Testament were not written by Moses."⁵

"**It is obvious** that the Book of Genesis was not written by a single author."⁶

"The most determined biblicist can see that **there is no way** Moses could have written the Torah."⁷

Statements such as these have made their way into thousands of classrooms. Sadly, before hearing the skeptics and liberal scholars present their arguments for such beliefs, students frequently become so spellbound by the "intellectual" façade and bold affirmations of certainty that they rarely even consider the evidence at hand.

MOSES AND THE ART OF WRITING

Amazingly, one of the first assumptions upon which this theory rests was disproved long ago. From the earliest period of the development of the Documentary Hypothesis, it was assumed that Moses lived in an age prior to the knowledge of writing. One of the "founding fathers" of this theory, Julius Wellhausen, was convinced that "[a]ncient Israel was certainly not without God-given bases for ordering of human life; **only they were not**

fixed in writing.⁸ Just a few years later, Hermann Schultz declared: “Of the legendary character of the pre-Mosaic narrators, the time of which they treat is a sufficient proof. **It was a time prior to all knowledge of writing.**”⁹ One year later, T.K. Cheyne’s *Encyclopaedia Biblica* was published, in which he contended that the Pentateuch was not written until **almost a thousand years after Moses.**¹⁰ These suppositions most certainly had an impact on these men’s belief in (and promotion of) the theory that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Old Testament.

One major problem with the Documentary Hypothesis is that we now know Moses did not live “prior to all knowledge of writing.” In fact, he lived **long after** the art of writing was already known. A veritable plethora of archaeological discoveries have proven one of the earliest assumptions of the Wellhausen theory to be wrong.

- In 1949, C.F.A. Schaeffer “found a tablet at Ras Shamra containing the thirty letters of the Ugaritic alphabet in their proper order. It was discovered that the sequence of the Ugaritic alphabet was the same as modern Hebrew, revealing that **the Hebrew alphabet goes back at least 3,500 years.**”¹¹
- In 1933, J.L. Starkey, who had studied under famed archaeologist W.M.F. Petrie, excavated the city of Lachish, which had figured prominently in Joshua’s conquest of Canaan (Joshua 10). Among other things, he unearthed a pottery water pitcher “inscribed with a dedication in eleven archaic letters, the earliest ‘Hebrew’ inscription known.”¹² According to Charles Pfeiffer, “The Old, or palaeo-Hebrew script is the form of writing which is similar to that used by the Phoenicians. A royal inscription of King Shaphatball of Gebal (Byblos) in this alphabet dates from about 1600 B.C.”¹³

- In 1901-1902, the Code of Hammurabi was discovered at the ancient site of Susa (in what is now Iran) by a French archaeological expedition under the direction of Jacques de Morgan. It was written on a piece of black diorite nearly eight feet high and contained 282 sections. In their book, *Archaeology and Bible History*, Joseph Free and Howard Vos stated:

The Code of Hammurabi was written several hundred years before the time of Moses (c. 1500-1400 B.C.).... This code, from the period 2000-1700 B.C., contains advanced laws similar to those in the Mosaic laws.... In view of this archaeological evidence, the destructive critic can no longer insist that the laws of Moses are too advanced for his time.¹⁴

The Code of Hammurabi established beyond doubt that writing was known hundreds of years before Moses.

As early as 1938, respected archaeologist William F. Albright, in discussing the various writing systems that existed in the Middle East during pre-Mosaic times, wrote:

In this connection it may be said that writing was well known in Palestine and Syria throughout the Patriarchal Age (Middle Bronze, 2100-1500 B.C.). No fewer than five scripts are known to have been in use: (1) Egyptian hieroglyphs, used for personal and place names by the Canaanites; (2) Accadian Cuneiform; (3) the hieroglyphiform syllabary of Phoenicia; (4) the linear alphabet of Sinai; and (5) the cuneiform alphabet of Ugarit which was discovered in 1929.¹⁵

The truth is, numerous archaeological discoveries of the past 100 years have proved once and for all that the

art of writing was known not only during Moses' day, but also long before he came on the scene. Although skeptics, liberal theologians, and college professors continue to perpetuate the Documentary Hypothesis, they must be informed (or reminded) of the fact that **one of the foundational assumptions upon which the theory rests has been completely shattered by archeological evidence.**

EVIDENCE FOR THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS—REFUTED

Many of the questions surrounding this theory were answered years ago by the respected scholar J.W. McGarvey. His book titled *The Authorship of Deuteronomy* (first published in 1902) silenced many supporters of the Documentary Hypothesis. Critics simply could not overcome his ability to detect and expose the many perversions of their teachings. Over the last century, however, critics eventually regained their confidence and began citing even more “evidence” for their theory. One category of “proof” frequently mentioned by skeptics and liberal scholars (which is the main focus of this chapter) is that of chronological lapses (also called anachronisms). Allegedly, numerous references found in the Pentateuch are said to be of a later time; hence, it is impossible for them to be Mosaic. According to Israel Finkelstein and Neil Silberman in their popular book on archaeology and the Bible, *The Bible Unearthed*, “archaeology has provided enough evidence to support a new contention that the historical core of the Pentateuch...was substantially shaped in the seventh century BCE”¹⁶—about 800 years **after** Moses lived. Two years earlier, Stephen

Van Eck wrote in the *Skeptical Review*: “[T]he best evidence against the Mosaic authorship is contained in the Pentateuch itself,” which “contains anachronistic references impossible to be the work of Moses.”¹⁷ Thus, allegedly, “at the very least, we can conclude that many elements in the patriarchal narratives are unhistorical.”¹⁸

Just what are these “anachronistic references” that are “impossible to be the work of Moses”? And are there reasonable explanations for them being in the Pentateuch? What can be said about the alleged chronological lapses that have led many to believe the stories of the Bible are unhistorical?

No King in Israel...Yet? (Genesis 36:31)

For most people, the 36th chapter of Genesis is “unfamiliar territory.” It is known more for being the chapter **after** Genesis 35 (in which details are given about Jacob’s name being changed to Israel) and **before** chapter 37 (where one can read about Joseph’s brothers selling him into slavery). Nowhere does Genesis 36 record the names of such patriarchs as Abraham, Isaac, or Joseph. (And Jacob is mentioned only once.) Nor are there any memorable stories from this portion of Genesis—of the kind that we learned in our youth. Perhaps the least-studied chapter in the first book of the Bible is Genesis 36—the genealogy of Esau.

Surprisingly to some, this often-overlooked chapter contains one of the more controversial phrases in the book. Genesis 36:31 states: “Now these were the kings who reigned in the land of Edom **before any king reigned over the children of Israel.**” According to skeptics and liberal theologians, the notation “before

any king reigned over the children of Israel” points to the days of the monarchs. Dennis McKinsey declared in his book, *Biblical Errancy*: “This passage could only have been written after the first king began to reign.... It had to have been written after Saul became king, while Moses, the alleged author, lived long before Saul.”¹⁹ Paul Tobin also indicated that this portion of the Bible “must therefore have been written, at the very earliest, after the first Jewish King, Saul, began to rule over the Israelites which was around three centuries after the death of Moses.”²⁰ Tobin went on to ask (what he feels certain cannot be answered): “Now how could Moses have known that there would be kings that reigned over the Israelites?”²¹

There are two logical reasons why Moses could mention future Israelite kingship. First, Moses knew about the express promises God had made both to Abraham and Jacob concerning the future kings of Israel. On one occasion, God informed Abraham and Sarah that many kings would be among their posterity. He promised Abraham saying, “And I will bless her [Sarah] and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; **kings of peoples shall be from her**” (Genesis 17:16). Years later (and just one chapter before the verse in question), when God appeared to Jacob at Bethel and changed his name to Israel, He said: “I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and **kings shall come from your body**” (Genesis 35:11). The fact that Genesis 36:31 reads, “Now these were the kings who reigned in the land of Edom **before any king reigned over the children**

of Israel,” does not mean this account must have been written by someone who lived after the monarchy was introduced to Israel. Rather, this statement was written with the **promise** in mind that kings would come from the loins of Abraham and Jacob, and it merely conveys the notion that Edom became a kingdom at an earlier time than Israel. Keil and Delitzsch remarked: “Such a thought was by no means inappropriate to the Mosaic age. For the idea, that Israel was destined to grow into a kingdom with monarchs of his [Jacob’s–EL] own family, was a hope handed down to the age of Moses, which the long residence in Egypt was well adapted to foster.”²² Furthermore, the placement of this parenthetical clause (“before any king reigned over the children of Israel”) in 36:31

was exceedingly natural on the part of the sacred historian, who, having but a few verses before (Gen 35:11) put on record the divine promise to Jacob that “kings should come out of his loins,” was led to remark the national prosperity and regal establishment of the Edomites long before the organization of a similar order of things in Israel. He could not help indulging such a reflection, when he contrasted the posterity of Esau with those of Jacob from the stand point of the promise (Gen 25:23).²³

A second reason Moses is justified in having knowledge of Israelite kingship before it was known experientially is because Moses was inspired (John 5:46; Mark 12:26; cf. Exodus 20:1; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). For someone to say that the author of Genesis could not have been Moses, because he spoke generally of Israelite kings prior to their existence totally ignores the fact that Moses

received special revelation from Heaven. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in Deuteronomy 17:14-15. Here Moses prophetically stated:

When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, “I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,” **you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses**; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

Under normal circumstances, such foreknowledge would be impossible. One must keep in mind, however, that “with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26)—and God was with Moses (cf. Exodus 3:12; 6:2; 25:22).

Were the Christian to claim that Moses wrote Genesis without being inspired or without having knowledge of the earlier promises made to Abraham and Jacob about the future kingship of Israel, the critic would be correct in concluding that Genesis 36:31 is anachronistic. But, the truth is, a Christian’s faith is based on the fact the Bible writers possessed access to supernatural revelation. Thus, Moses’ superior knowledge is not a problem. Rather, it is to be expected.

Domesticated Camels in Abraham’s Day? (Genesis 12:16; 24:63)

Arguably, the most widely alleged anachronisms used in support of the idea that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible are the accounts of the early patriarchs possessing camels. The word “camel(s)” appears 23 times in 21 verses in the book of Genesis.

The first book of the Bible declares that camels existed in Egypt during the time of Abraham (12:14-17), in Palestine in the days Isaac (24:63), and in Padan Aram while Jacob was working for Laban (30:43). Furthermore, they were owned by the Midianites during the time Joseph was sold into Egyptian slavery (37:25,36). Make no mistake about it—the book of beginnings clearly teaches that camels were domesticated since at least the time of Abraham.

According to skeptics and a growing number of Bible critics, however, the idea that Moses would have written about camels being domesticated in the time of Abraham directly contradicts archaeological evidence. Over one hundred years ago, T.K. Cheyne wrote: “The assertion that the ancient Egyptians knew of the camel is unfounded.”²⁴ In Norman Gottwald’s defense of the Documentary Hypothesis, he cited the mention of camels in Genesis as one of the main “indications that the standpoint of the writer was later than the age of Moses.”²⁵ Finkelstein and Silberman confidently asserted:

We now know through archaeological research that **camels were not domesticated as beasts of burden earlier than the late second millennium** and were not widely used in that capacity in the ancient Near East until well after 1000 BCE.²⁶

By way of summary, what the Bible believer has been told is: “[T]ame camels were simply unknown during Abraham’s time.”²⁷

While these claims have been made repeatedly over the last century, the truth is that skeptics and liberal theologians are unable to cite one piece of solid archaeological evidence in support of their claims. As Randall Younker of Andrews University stated in March 2000 while

delivering a speech in the Dominican Republic: “Clearly, scholars who have denied the presence of domesticated camels in the 2nd millennium BC have been committing the fallacy of arguing from silence. This approach should not be allowed to cast doubt upon the veracity of any historical document, let alone Scripture.”²⁸ The burden of proof actually should be upon skeptics to show that camels were not domesticated until after the time of the patriarchs. Instead, they assure their listeners of the camel’s absence in Abraham’s day without one shred of archaeological evidence. (Remember, for many years they also argued that writing was unknown during the time of Moses—a conclusion based entirely on “silence.” Now, however, they have recanted that idea, because evidence has been found to the contrary.)

What makes their claims even more disturbing is that several pieces of evidence do exist (and have existed for some time) that prove camels were domesticated during (and even before) the time of Abraham (ca. 2,000 B.C.). In an article that appeared in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* nearly a century ago, professor Joseph Free listed several instances of Egyptian archaeological finds supporting the domestication of camels.²⁹ The earliest evidence comes from a pottery camel head and a terra cotta tablet with men riding on and leading camels. According to Free, these are both from predynastic Egypt,³⁰ which according to Peter Clayton, author of *Chronicle of the Pharaohs*, is ca. before 3150 B.C. Free also lists three clay camel heads and a limestone vessel in the form of a camel lying down—all dated at the First Dynasty of Egypt (3050-2890 B.C.). He then mentions several models of camels from the Fourth Dynasty

(2613-2498 B.C.) and a petroglyph depicting a camel and a man dated at the Sixth Dynasty (2345-2184 B.C.). Such evidence led respected Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen to conclude that “the extant evidence clearly indicates that the domestic camel was known [in Egypt–EL] by 3,000 B.C.”³¹—long before Abraham’s time.

Perhaps the most convincing find in support of the early domestication of camels in Egypt is a rope made of camel’s hair found in the Fayum (an oasis area southwest of modern-day Cairo). The two-strand twist of hair, measuring a little over three feet long, was found in the late 1920s, and was sent to the Natural History Museum where it was analyzed and compared to the hair of several different animals. After much testing, it was determined to be camel hair, dated (by analyzing the layer in which it was found) to the Third or Fourth Egyptian Dynasty (2686-2498 B.C.). In his article, Free also listed several other discoveries from around 2,000 B.C. and later, each of which showed camels as domestic animals.³²

While prolific in Egypt, finds relating to the domestication of camels are not limited to the African continent. In his book, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*, Kenneth Kitchen, professor emeritus of the University of Liverpool, reported several discoveries **made outside of Egypt**, proving ancient camel domestication existed around 2,000 B.C. Lexical lists from Mesopotamia have been uncovered that show a knowledge of domesticated camels as far back as that time. Camel bones have been found in household ruins at Mari in present-day Syria that fossilologists believe are also at least 4,000 years old. Furthermore, a Sumerian text from the time of Abraham has been discovered in the ancient city of

Nippur (located in what is now southeastern Iraq) that clearly implies the domestication of camels by its allusions to camels' milk.³³

All of these documented finds support the domestication of camels in Egypt many years before the time of Abraham. Yet, as Younker so well said, skeptics refuse to acknowledge any of this evidence.

It is interesting to note how, once an idea gets into the literature, it can become entrenched in conventional scholarly thinking. I remember doing research on the ancient site of Hama in Syria. As I was reading through the excavation reports (published in French), I came across a reference to a figurine from the 2nd millennium which the excavator thought must be a horse, but the strange hump in the middle of its back made one think of a camel. I looked at the photograph and the figurine was obviously that of a camel! The scholar was so influenced by the idea that camels were not used until the 1st millennium, that when he found a figurine of one in the second millennium, he felt compelled to call it a horse! This is a classic example of circular reasoning.³⁴

Finds relating to the domestication of camels are not as prevalent in the second millennium B.C. as they are in the first millennium. However, this does not make the skeptic's case any stronger. Just because camels may not have been as widely used during Abraham's time as they were later, does not mean that they were entirely undomesticated. As Free commented:

Many who have rejected this reference to Abraham's camels seem to have assumed something which the text does not state. **It should**

be carefully noted that the biblical reference does not necessarily indicate that the camel was common in Egypt at that time, nor does it evidence that the Egyptians had made any great progress in the breeding and domestication of camels. It merely says that Abraham had camels.³⁵

Similarly, Younker noted:

This is not to say that domesticated camels were abundant and widely used everywhere in the ancient Near East in the early second millennium. However, the patriarchal narratives do not necessarily require large numbers of camels.... The smaller amount of evidence for domestic camels in the late third and early second millennium B.C., especially in Palestine, is in accordance with this more restricted use.³⁶

Even without the above-mentioned archaeological finds (which to the unbiased examiner surely demonstrates that camels were domesticated in the time of Abraham), it only seems reasonable to conclude that since wild camels have been known since the Creation, “there is no credible reason why such an indispensable animal in desert and semi-arid lands should not have been sporadically domesticated in patriarchal times and even earlier.”³⁷ The truth is, all of the available evidence points to one thing: the limited use of domesticated camels during and before the time of Abraham. The supposed “anachronism” of domesticated camels during the time of the patriarchs is, in fact, an actual historical reference to the use of these animals at that time. Those who reject this conclusion cannot give solid archaeological evidence on their behalf. They simply argue from the “silence” of archaeology³⁸...which is silent no more!

Moses' Knowledge of Gates (Deuteronomy 15:22)

A further “proof” against Mosaic authorship is the mention of gates throughout the Pentateuch. As McKinsey wrote: “Deut. 15:22 says, ‘Thou shalt eat it within thy gates.’ The phrase ‘within thy gates’ occurs in the Pentateuch about twenty-five times and refers to the gates of Palestinian cities, which the Israelites did not inhabit until **after** the death of Moses.”³⁹ In making this statement, however, Mr. McKinsey is in gross error by assuming that the passage is referring to the “gates of Palestinian cities.” Moreover, what skeptics like McKinsey fail to mention is the fact that “gate” does not necessarily mean the large doors in the walls of fortified cities. Sometimes, gates are used to represent entrances into areas of dwelling, as in Exodus 32:26: “Then Moses stood **in the gate of the camp**, and said, ‘Whoso is on Jehovah’s side, *let him come* unto me.’ And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him” (ASV). Would anyone suppose that the Israelites built walls and gates around their Bedouin-style tent cities? Therefore, “gate” can mean the entrance to a city—of tents. In fact, the Hebrew word for gate (*šā‘ar*) is translated as “entrance” ten times in the NIV. And in the NKJV, *šā‘ar* is translated as “entrance” in Exodus 32:26.

Giving Dennis McKinsey the benefit of the doubt (that the term “gates” refers to the Palestinian cities), Moses could have been referring to the cities that the Israelites would capture in the future. Since he was inspired while writing the Pentateuch (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21), this knowledge could have been the result of that inspiration, similar to the knowledge that Israel

would one day have a king. Either way, the mention of “gates” in the Pentateuch is not anachronistic.

Canaanites Were in the Land Then

(Genesis 12:6; 13:7)

Have you ever wondered why, if Moses wrote the Pentateuch, in Genesis 12:6 and 13:7 the Bible says (in reference to the time of Abraham), “[t]he Canaanites were **then** in the land”? If the Canaanites occupied the land of Canaan in Moses’ day, why would Moses write that they were in the land **then** (i.e., in the days of Abraham)? Would these verses not make more sense if we understood them as being written at a time when the Canaanites had been driven out of the land of Canaan (something that would not occur until hundreds of years **after** the death of Moses)? According to several critics, this is exactly what the verses are implying.⁴⁰ Supposedly, Moses could not have been the author of the passage; else it would not have made sense to its original audience.

The phrase “the Canaanites were **then** in the land” does not necessarily have to point to a time after Moses when the Canaanites were no longer in Canaan. When one takes the context of these passages into consideration, and the momentous events of Abraham leaving his homeland and coming to the new region that his descendents would one day occupy, he or she easily can understand that the phrase in question refers to this land promise (12:7). The words “then in the land” are indicating merely “that the land into which Abram had come was not uninhabited and without a possessor; so that Abram could not regard it at once as his own and proceed to take possession of it, but could only wander

in it in faith as in a foreign land (Heb. 11:9).⁴¹ Likely, the Canaanites are mentioned as being in the land at the time of Abraham's entrance in order "to show the strength of his faith in the promise recorded."⁴² Such phraseology involves neither a contradiction nor an absurdity.

Philistines in the Time of Abraham?

(Genesis 21:32; 26:1)

The Bible declares that long before King David fought the Philistine giant named Goliath in the valley of Elah (1 Samuel 17), Abraham and Isaac had occasional contact with a people known as the Philistines. In fact, seven of the eight times that the Philistines are mentioned in Genesis, they are discussed in connection with either Abraham's visit with Abimelech, king of the Philistines (21:32,34), or with Isaac's visit to the same city (Gerar) a few years later (26:1,8,14-15,18). For some time now, critics of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch have considered the mention of the Philistines—so early in human history—to be inappropriately inserted into the patriarchal account. Supposedly, "Philistines...did not come into Palestine until **after** the time of Moses,"⁴³ and any mention of them before that time represents "an historical inaccuracy."⁴⁴ Thus, as Millar Burrows concluded, the mention of Philistines in Genesis may be considered "a convenient and harmless anachronism," which "is undoubtedly a mistake."⁴⁵

As with most allegations brought against the Scriptures, those who claim the Philistine nation was not around in Abraham's day are basing their conclusion on at least one unprovable assumption—namely, that the Philistines living in the days of the patriarchs were a

great nation, similar to the one living during the time of the United Kingdom. The evidence suggests, however, that this assumption is wrong. The Bible does not present the Philistines of Abraham's day as the same mighty Philistine nation that would arise hundreds of years later. Abimelech, the king of Gerar, is portrayed as being intimidated by Abraham (cf. Genesis 21:25). Surely, had the Philistine people been a great nation in the time of the patriarchs, they would not have been afraid of one man (Abraham) and a few hundred servants (cf. Genesis 14:14). Furthermore, of the five great Philistine city-states that were so prominent throughout the period of the Judges and the United Kingdom (Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza—Joshua 13:3; 1 Samuel 6:17), none was mentioned. Rather, only a small village known as Gerar was named. To assume that the Bible presents the entire civilization of the Philistines as being present during Abraham's day is to err. In reality, one reads only of a small Philistine kingdom.

The word "Philistine" was a rather generic term meaning "sea people." No doubt, some of the Aegean sea people made their way to Palestine long before a later migration took place—one that was considerably larger. In commenting on these Philistines, Larry Richards observed:

While there is general agreement that massive settlement of the coast of Canaan by sea peoples from Crete took place around 1200 B.C., there is no reason to suppose Philistine settlements did not exist long before this time. In Abram's time as in the time of Moses a variety of peoples had settled in Canaan, including Hittites from the far

north. Certainly the seagoing peoples who traded the Mediterranean had established colonies along the shores of the entire basin for centuries prior to Abraham's time. There is no reason to suppose that Philistines, whose forefathers came from Crete, were not among them.⁴⁶

No archaeological evidence exists that denies various groups of "sea people" were in Canaan long before the arrival of the main body in the early 12th century B.C.⁴⁷ To assume that not a single group of Philistines lived in Palestine during the time of Abraham because archaeology has not documented them until about 1190 B.C. is to argue from negative evidence, and is without substantial weight. In response to those who would deny the Philistines' existence based upon their silence in the archeological world before this time, professor Kitchen stated: "Inscriptionally, we know so little about the Aegean peoples as compared with those of the rest of the Ancient Near East in the second millennium B.C., that it is premature to deny outright the possible existence of Philistines in the Aegean area before 1200 B.C."⁴⁸ Likely, successive waves of sea peoples from the Aegean Sea migrated to Canaan even as early as Abraham's time, and continued coming until the massive movement in the 12th century B.C.⁴⁹

How Could Moses Have Written Deuteronomy 34?

So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day. Moses was one hundred and twenty

years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended.

Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.

But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel (Deuteronomy 34:5-12).

Even for those who are completely convinced by the evidence that Moses was the inspired writer of “the Law,” some respectfully question whether he actually penned the end of Deuteronomy, which records the death and burial of Moses, as well as “the changing of the guard,” from Moses to Joshua. How could Moses have recorded these things if he had already died?

First of all, is it possible that the same God Who gave Moses supernatural revelation about what happened at the beginning of the Creation of the Universe (which no human being witnessed) also supernaturally revealed to Moses what would happen at (and after) his death? To ask is to answer. Furthermore, God revealed a number of things to Moses about the future that he penned in the Pentateuch—from Israel’s future earthly kings (Genesis

36:31; Deuteronomy 17:14-15) to the coming of Jesus, the King of kings (Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3; 22:18; 49:10; Numbers 24:17; Deuteronomy 18:15-18). If Moses could write accurately through inspiration about events that would happen hundreds of years after his death, could he not also write about his death? Certainly he could.

It also may be, however, that a Bible believer could reasonably and respectfully make the case that, though Moses wrote the Pentateuch, the last few sentences in Deuteronomy could have been written by another inspired writer (possibly Joshua). Even J.W. McGarvey, who penned an entire volume defending the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy in 1902, believed that “the account of the death of Moses, and some comments on his career...undoubtedly came from the pen of some later writer or writers.”⁵⁰

Consider a possible modern-day parallel: What if a mother wrote a 200-page book titled “10 Things to Remember when Educating Kids at Home,” but as she was finishing the final few sentences (after having already concluded her 10 main points) she suffered a stroke and died? Could her husband and children publish the book and call her the author even though they actually completed the final 10 sentences of the book? Surely few, if any, would think that such actions on the part of the family would be unfair or dishonest. However, if the mother was called the author but had not written any of the book, such attribution could legitimately be considered deceitful. Or, if she was called the author, but most of the material was written hundreds of years later, that, too, would be a false claim.

In short, the account of Moses' death serves as no stumbling block to the Christian. Perhaps Moses recorded it by divine revelation prior to his death. Or, perhaps God used Joshua or someone else of his choosing to pen it by inspiration. Either way, one can still be confident that "the Book of the law of the Lord" was "given by Moses" (2 Chronicles 34:14).

DOES IT REALLY MATTER WHO WROTE THE PENTATEUCH?

To some, the question of whether or not Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible is a trivial matter—one of secondary importance. After all, we do not consider it a necessity to know whom God inspired to write the book of Job or the epistle of Hebrews. We do not put great emphasis on who wrote 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles. Why, then, should the discussion of who penned the first five books of the Bible be any different? **The difference is that the Bible is replete with references attributing these books to Moses.** Within the Pentateuch itself, one can read numerous times how Moses wrote the law of God.

- "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord" (Exodus 24:4).
- "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write these words...'" (Exodus 34:27).
- "Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the Lord" (Numbers 33:2).
- "So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests..." (Deuteronomy 31:9).

Bible writers throughout the Old Testament credited

Moses with writing the Pentateuch. A plain statement of this commonly held conviction is expressed in Joshua 8:32: “There, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua copied on stones **the law of Moses, which he** [Moses] **had written**” (NIV). Notice also that 2 Chronicles 34:14 states: “Hilkiah the priest found **the Book** of the Law of the Lord **given by Moses**” (cf. Ezra 3:2; 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Malachi 4:4). As Josh McDowell noted in his book, *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, these verses “refer to an actual written ‘law of Moses,’ not simply an oral tradition.”⁵¹

[NOTE: The Hebrew Bible was not divided like our modern-day English Old Testament. It consisted of three divisions: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (cf. Luke 24:44). It contained the same “books” we have today; it was just divided differently. Genesis through Deuteronomy was considered one unit, and thus frequently it was called “the Law” or “the Book” (2 Chronicles 25:4; cf. Mark 12:26). Even a casual perusal of its individual components will confirm that each book presupposes the one that precedes it. Without Genesis, Exodus reads like a book begun midway; without Exodus, Leviticus is a mystery; and so on. They were not intended to be five separate volumes in a common category, but rather, are five divisions of the same book. Hence, the singular references: “the Law” or “the Book.”]

The New Testament writers also showed no hesitation in affirming that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. John wrote: “[T]he law was given through Moses” (John 1:17). Luke recorded of the resurrected Jesus: “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them

[His disciples] in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). Referring to the Jewish practice of publicly reading the Law, James affirmed Mosaic authorship: “For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath” (Acts 15:21). With this Paul concurred, saying, “For **Moses writes** about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them”” (Romans 10:5; cf. Leviticus 18:5). In 2 Corinthians 3:15, Paul also wrote: “Moses is read.” The phrase “Moses is read” is a clear example of the figure of speech known as metonymy (when authors are put for the works which they have produced).⁵² Today, we may ask someone if he has read Homer, Virgil, or Shakespeare, by which we mean to ask if he has read the writings of these men. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, one can read where Abraham spoke to the rich man concerning his five brothers saying, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them” (Luke 16:29). Were Moses and the Old Testament prophets still on Earth in the first century? No. The meaning is that the rich man’s brothers had **the writings of Moses** and the prophets.

Furthermore, both Jesus’ disciples and His enemies recognized and accepted the books of Moses. After Philip was called to follow Jesus, he found his brother Nathanael and said: “We have found Him of whom **Moses in the law**, and also the prophets, **wrote**—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). Notice also that New Testament Sadducees considered Moses as the author, saying, “Teacher, **Moses wrote to us** that if a man’s brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no

children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother” (Mark 12:19; cf. Deuteronomy 25:5; Luke 20:28).

A final reason that Christians should defend the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, instead of claiming, “it doesn’t really matter who wrote it,” is because Jesus Himself claimed “the Law” came from Moses. In Mark 7:10, Jesus quoted from both Exodus 20 and 21, attributing the words to Moses. Mark also recorded a conversation Jesus had with the Pharisees regarding what “Moses permitted” and “wrote” in Deuteronomy chapter 24 (Mark 10:3-5; cf. Matthew 19:8). Later, we read where Jesus asked the Sadducees, “[H]ave you not read **in the book of Moses**, in the burning bush passage, how **God spoke to him**, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?” (Mark 12:26). But, perhaps the most convincing passage of all is found in John 5:46-47 where Jesus said: “For if you believed **Moses**, you would believe Me; for **he wrote about Me**. But if you do not believe **his writings**, how will you believe My words?” (John 5:46-47; cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-18). The truth is, by claiming that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, one essentially is claiming that Jesus was mistaken. M.R. DeHaan expounded upon this problem in his book *Genesis and Evolution*:

Prove that Moses did not write the books of the Pentateuch and you prove that Jesus was totally mistaken and not the infallible Son of God he claimed to be. Upon your faith in Moses as the writer of the five books attributed to him rests also your faith in Jesus as the Son of God. You cannot believe in Jesus Christ without believing

what Moses wrote. You see, there is much more involved in denying the books of Moses than most people suppose.⁵³

Indeed, believing Moses wrote the Pentateuch is very important. It is not a trivial subject we should treat frivolously while suggesting that “it really doesn’t matter.” It matters because the credibility of Christ and the integrity of the Bible writers are at stake!

Chapter 4



ALLEGED NUMERICAL CONTRADICTIONS

NUMBER OF LANGUAGES BEFORE BABEL: ONE, OR MANY?

Genesis 10:5,20,31; 11:1

According to some skeptics, Genesis 10 verses 5, 20, and 31 contradict what is stated in Genesis 11:1. Supposedly, since Moses recorded that the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth spoke different “languages” (plural) in Genesis 10, and yet he indicated that “the whole earth had **one** language and **one** speech” in Genesis 11:1, then a discrepancy exists. Obviously, before the dispersion of man at Babel, the whole Earth could not have both **many** languages and **only one** language at the same time.

The explanation to this “problem” is simply that the events recorded in Genesis 10-11 were not written chronologically. Genesis 10 is more of an overview, while

Genesis 11 speaks of one event within Genesis 10. Some of the things recorded in chapter 10 occurred before the tower of Babel, while others occurred sometime later. As we discussed in chapter two, Genesis 2:5-25 does not pick up where chapter 1 left off; rather, it provides more detailed information about some of the events mentioned in chapter one. (Genesis 1 is arranged chronologically, and Genesis 2 is organized topically.) Several of the events in Genesis 38 involving Judah and Tamar occurred while the things recorded in chapter 39 (and those that follow) took place. Similar to a teacher who is telling her class a story, and inserts information into it about something the main character did in the past or will do in the future, Moses “jumps” ahead of himself at times by inserting parenthetical material like that found in Genesis 10.

Aside from the languages mentioned in Genesis 10, there is another “clue” in the text that reveals the events recorded in chapter 11 occurred **before** the descendants of Noah began speaking different languages and spreading throughout the Earth. Genesis 10:25 mentions a man named Peleg (meaning “division”) who received such a name because “in his days the earth was divided.” More than likely, this is a reference to the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel described in chapter 11. The “Earth” (i.e., people; cf. 11:1) divided when God confused the languages (11:7-8). Thus, the division in Peleg’s day is linked contextually to the linguistic segregation at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9).

When Genesis 10 and 11 are read with the understanding that not all events are recorded chronologically, one clearly sees how the events revealed in these chapters are entwined tightly with one another—so tightly in fact

that those who seek contradictions are doomed to fail. Linguistically speaking, there was no pre-Babel confusion; only one language was in existence (Genesis 11:1).¹

HOW MANY DAUGHTERS DID LOT HAVE?

Genesis 19:8,14-16

In the famous narrative of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah recorded in Genesis 19, one discovers that Lot, his wife, and two daughters are led outside of the city in order to avoid death by means of fire and brimstone. Although Lot's wife was not destroyed in the devastation of these cities, she never made it to the mountains to take refuge with Lot and her daughters, but instead was turned into a pillar of salt for looking back upon the devastated cities after specifically being warned otherwise (cf. 19:17,26). Of the inhabitants of the cities who were destroyed on that day of reckoning, only Lot and his two daughters survived (19:25-26).

A casual reading of this memorable event has led some to believe (and advocate) that there is a contradiction involving the number of Lot's daughters. In the beginning of Genesis 19, we find where Lot tells a harassing mob outside his house in Sodom that he has **"two daughters who have not known a man"** (19:8). Later, after two angels warned Lot to leave the city because it was going to be destroyed, the text says that "Lot went out and spoke to his **sons-in-law, who had married his daughters"** (19:14). The next morning the angels urged Lot to hasten their departure saying, "Arise, take your wife and your **two daughters who are here**, lest you be consumed in

the punishment of the city” (19:15). While the patriarch lingered, the angels “took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and **the hands of his two daughters**...and they brought him out and set him outside the city” (19:16).

The question that has been posed about the Bible’s description of Lot’s family is as follows: If Lot only had two daughters who were virgins (“not known a man”—19:8), then how could he have “sons-in-law”? Is this a legitimate contradiction, or is there an adequate explanation?

One possible explanation to this supposed contradiction is that Lot actually had more than two daughters. But how can that be when the text simply speaks of Lot and his “**two daughters**”? The answer could be found in verse 15, where Lot’s two daughters **in the house** might be contrasted with other daughters who were married to his sons-in-law (19:14), and thus were **out of the house**. Since the angels who urged Lot to hasten his departure modified “two daughters” with the phrase “who are here,” then it is conceivable that Lot could have had daughters elsewhere who remained in Sodom and were destroyed along with Lot’s sons-in-law.

Another explanation revolves around the modifying phrase “who had married his daughters” (19:14). The words “who had married” are from the Hebrew word *laqach*, which means in the widest variety of applications “to take” or “to grasp.” In this passage, the word obviously is used in reference to taking a “wife.” According to Hebrew scholar Victor Hamilton, “The Hebrew form used here is a participle (*loqcheey*), and as such is without a specific tense reference. Even the ancient versions differed on how to render the participle, with the

[Latin] Vulgate opting for a future tense, and the LXX [Septuagint—the first Greek translation of the Old Testament] opting for a past tense.”² Biblical commentator John Willis agreed, saying, “The Hebrew lying behind the phrase **who were to marry** can be interpreted equally well in either of two ways.”³ Interestingly, most modern translations (including the NASB, RSV, and NIV) agree with first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus in making these men **future** sons-in-law.⁴ This is in contrast to the KJV, ASV, and NKJV, each of which renders these men as **already being** sons-in-law (“who had married”). No doubt the translators of the more modern versions believed that Lot’s “sons-in-law” were only **betrothed**, not married, to Lot’s daughters at the time they departed Sodom.

Other information that adds credence to the “future sons-in-law” position revolves around how people in ancient times viewed their future spouses. In the first chapter of the first book in the New Testament, we read where Joseph was called Mary’s “husband” while they were betrothed and before they were married. The text reads:

After His [Jesus’] mother Mary was **betrothed** to Joseph, **before they came together**, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then **Joseph her husband**, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded **to put her away** secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid **to take to you Mary your wife**, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:18-20).

The wording of this passage is not just a simple use of “prolepsis” (the assignment of a name, description, or event to a time that precedes it). Rather, betrothal was a valid marriage in Jewish law.⁵ When marriage vows were said at the betrothal, a “putting away” or a divorce was required to end them. Furthermore, according to Josephus’ comments about Hyrcanus II being Herod’s father-in-law four years before Herod married his granddaughter (Mariamne), **espousals of old were a sufficient foundation for kinship.**⁶

In light of all this information, one surely can understand that there is no proven contradiction in Genesis 19. Either Lot had more than two daughters (which the text allows), or Lot’s two virgin daughters were betrothed to men who were called Lot’s sons-in-law before the marriage was consummated (perhaps the more likely of the two explanations).

DID 70 OR 75 JOURNEY TO EGYPT?

Genesis 46:27; Exodus 1:1,5; Acts 7:14

Three times in the Old Testament, it is stated that seventy people from the house of Jacob went down into Egypt. According to Genesis 46:27, “All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were **seventy.**” In the first few verses of the book of Exodus, Jacob’s sons are named, and then again we are told, “All those who were descendants of Jacob were **seventy** persons” (Exodus 1:1,5). The third Old Testament reference to this number is found in Deuteronomy 10:22, where Moses spoke to the Israelites about the “great and awesome things” that God had done for them (10:21). He then reminded the children of Israel of how their “fathers

went down to Egypt with **seventy** persons,” which God made “as the stars of heaven in multitude” (Deuteronomy 10:22). The difficulty that Christians are challenged to resolve is how these verses can be understood in light of Stephen’s statement recorded in Acts 7:12-14. Being “full of the Holy Spirit” (7:55) with a “face as the face of an angel” (6:15), Stephen reminded the Jews of their history, saying, “When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family became known to the Pharaoh. **Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people**” (Acts 7:12-14). Skeptics, as well as concerned Christians who seek to back their faith with reasonable answers, desire to know why Acts 7:14 mentions “seventy-five people,” while Genesis 46:27, Exodus 1:5, and Deuteronomy 10:22 mention only “seventy persons.” Exactly how many of Jacob’s household went to Egypt?

Similar to how a person truthfully can give different degrees for the boiling point of water (100° Celsius or 212° Fahrenheit), different figures are given in the Bible for the number of Jacob’s family members who traveled into Egypt. Stephen (in Acts 7:14) did not contradict the Old Testament passages where the number seventy is used; he merely computed the number differently. Precisely how Stephen calculated this number is a matter of speculation. Consider the following:

- In Genesis 46:27, neither Jacob’s wife (cf. 35:19) nor his concubines are included in the seventy figure.
- Despite the mention of Jacob’s “daughters and his son’s daughters” (46:7), it seems that the only daughter

included in the “seventy” was Dinah (vs. 15), and the only granddaughter was Serah (vs. 17).

- The wives of Jacob’s sons are not included in the seventy (46:26).
- Finally, whereas only two descendants of Joseph are mentioned in Genesis 46 in the Masoretic text of the Old Testament, in the Septuagint, Joseph’s descendants are calculated as being nine.

Taking into consideration how many individuals were omitted from “the seventy persons” mentioned in the Old Testament, at least two possible solutions to this alleged contradiction may be offered. First, it is possible that Stephen included Jacob’s daughters-in-law in his calculation of seventy-five. Jacob’s children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren amounted to sixty-six (Genesis 46:8-26). If Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph’s two sons are added, then the total number is seventy (46:27). If, however, to the sixty-six Stephen added the wives of Jacob’s sons’, he could have legitimately reckoned Jacob’s household as numbering seventy-five, instead of seventy. [NOTE: Jacob is listed by Stephen individually.] Yet, someone might ask how sixty-six plus “twelve” equals seventy-five. Simple—not all of the wives were included. Joseph’s wife obviously would not have been calculated into this figure, if Joseph himself were not. And, at least two of the eleven remaining wives may have been deceased by the time the family journeyed to Egypt. We know for sure that Judah’s wife had already died by this time (Genesis 38:12), and it is reasonable to conclude that another of the wives had passed away as well. (In all likelihood, Simeon’s wife had already died—cf. Genesis 46:10.) Thus, when Stephen stated that “Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and

all his relatives to him, seventy-five people” (Acts 7:14), realistically he could have included the **living** wives of Joseph’s brothers to get a different (though not a contradictory) number.

A second possible solution to this alleged contradiction is that Stephen quoted from the Septuagint. Although Deuteronomy 10:22 reads the same in both the Masoretic text and the Septuagint (“seventy”), Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 1:5 differ in the two texts. Whereas the Masoretic text says “seventy” in both passages, the Septuagint says “seventy-five.” As R.C.H. Lenski concluded, however: “This is a mere matter of counting.”⁷

The descendants of Jacob that went to Egypt were sixty-six in number (Gen. 46:26), but counting Joseph and his two sons and Jacob himself (Gen. 46:27), the number is seventy. In the LXX [Septuagint–EL] all the sons of Joseph who he got in Egypt were counted, “nine souls,” which, with the sixty-six, made seventy-five.⁸

Thus, instead of adding the nine living wives of Joseph’s brothers (as proposed in the aforementioned solution), this scenario suggests that the number seventy-five is the result following the reading from the Septuagint—which includes the grandchildren of Joseph (cf. 1 Chronicles 7:14-21). [NOTE: The Septuagint and the Masoretic text may differ, but they do not contradict each other—the former simply mentions some of Joseph’s descendants who are not recorded by the latter.] In Albert Barnes’ comments concerning these differences, he appropriately noted:

Why the Septuagint inserted these [Joseph’s descendants–EL], it may not be easy to see. But such was

evidently the fact; and the fact accords accurately with the historic record, though Moses did not insert their names. The solution of difficulties in regard to chronology is always difficult; and **what might be entirely apparent to a Jew in the time of Stephen, may be wholly inexplicable to us.**⁹

One of the more “inexplicable” things regarding the 70 (or 75) “of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt,” revolves around the mention of some of Jacob’s descendants who apparently were not born until sometime **after** the journey to Egypt was completed. If one accepts the Septuagint’s tally of 75, including the grandchildren of Joseph, he also must conclude that Manasseh and Ephraim (Joseph’s sons) fathered these children sometime **after** Jacob’s migration to Egypt, and possibly before Jacob’s death 17 years later (since Ephraim and Manasseh still were very young when the house of Jacob moved to Egypt). If one excludes the Septuagint from this discussion, there still are at least two possible indications in Genesis 46 that not all “seventy” were born before Jacob’s family arrived in Egypt. First, Hezron and Hamul (the sons of Perez) are included in the “seventy” (46:12), yet the evidence strongly leans toward these great-grandsons of Jacob not being born until **after** the migration. Considering that Judah, the grandfather of Hezron and Hamul, was only about forty-three when the migration to Egypt took place, and that the events recorded in Genesis 38 (involving his family) occurred over a number of years, it seems logical to conclude, as did Steven Mathewson in his “Exegetical Study of Genesis 38,” that “Judah’s sons Perez and Zerah were quite young, perhaps just a few months old, when they traveled to Egypt. Therefore it would have been impossible for Perez to have fathered Hezron and

Hamul, his two sons mentioned in Genesis 46:12, before the journey into Egypt.”¹⁰ He went on to note:

A close look, however, at Genesis 46:12 reveals a variation in the mention of Hezron and Hamul. The end of the verse reads: “And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.” Yet throughout Genesis 46, the listing of descendants was done without the use of a verbal form. For example, verse 12a reads, “And the sons of Judah: Er and Onan and Shelah and Perez and Zerah.”¹¹

Hebrew scholar Umberto Cassuto commented on this “special phraseology,” saying, “This external variation creates the impression that the Bible wished to give us here some special information that was different from what it desired to impart relative to the other descendants of Israel.”¹² Cassuto also explained what he thought was the intention behind this special use of the verb “were.”

It intended to inform us thereby that the sons of Perez were not among those who went down to Egypt, but are mentioned here for some other reason. This is corroborated by the fact that Joseph’s sons were also not of those who immigrated into Egypt, and they, too, are mentioned by a different formula.¹³

A second indication that all “seventy” were likely not born before Jacob’s family migrated to Egypt is that ten “sons” (descendants) of Benjamin are listed (46:21). If Joseph was thirty-nine at the time of this migration (cf. 41:46), one can figure (roughly) the age of Benjamin by calculating the amount of time that passed between their births. It was **after** Joseph’s birth that his father, Jacob, worked his final six years for Laban in Padan Aram

(30:25; 31:38,41). We know that Benjamin was more than six years younger than Joseph, because he was not born until sometime after Jacob discontinued working for Laban. In fact, Benjamin was not born until after Jacob: (1) departed Padan Aram (31:18); (2) crossed over the river (Euphrates—31:21); (3) met with his brother, Esau, near Penuel (32:22,31; 33:2); (4) built a house in Succoth (33:17); (5) pitched his tent in Shechem (33:18); and (6) built an altar to God at Bethel (35:1-19). Obviously, a considerable amount of time passed between Jacob's separation from Laban in Padan Aram and the birth of Benjamin near Bethlehem. Albert Barnes conservatively estimated that Benjamin was thirteen years younger than Joseph.¹⁴ Biblical commentator John T. Willis said Benjamin was likely about fourteen years younger than Joseph.¹⁵ Also, considering that Benjamin was referred to as "lad" ("boy"—NIV) eight times in Genesis chapters 43 and 44, which record events directly preceding Jacob's move to Egypt, one would not expect Benjamin to be any more than 25 or 26 years of age at the time of the migration. What is somewhat perplexing to the Bible reader is that even though Benjamin was by far the youngest son of Jacob, more of his descendants are named in Genesis 46 than any other son of Jacob. In fact, some of these descendants of Benjamin apparently were his **grandsons** (cf. Numbers 26:38-40; 1 Chronicles 8:1-5).

But how is it that ten of Benjamin's descendants, along with Hezron and Hamul, legitimately could appear in a list with those who traveled to Egypt, when all indications are that at least some were yet to be born? Answer: Because some of the names are brought in by prolepsis (or anticipation). Although they might not

have been born by the time Jacob left for Egypt, they were in his loins—they “came from his body” (Genesis 46:26). Old Testament commentators Keil and Delitzsch stated: “From all this it necessarily follows, that in the list before us grandsons and great-grandsons of Jacob are named who were born afterwards in Egypt, and who, therefore, according to a view which we frequently meet with in the Old Testament, though strange to our modes of thought, came into Egypt *in lumbis patrum*” (i.e., in the loins of their father).¹⁶ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown agreed, saying:

The natural impression conveyed by these words [“these are the names of the children of Israel which came into Egypt”—EL] is, that the genealogy which follows contains a list of all the members of Jacob’s family, of whatever age, whether arrived at manhood or carried in their mother’s arms, who, having been born in Canaan, actually removed along with him to Egypt.... A closer examination, however, will show sufficient grounds for concluding that the genealogy was constructed on a very different principle—not that of naming only those members of Jacob’s family who were natives of Canaan, but of enumerating those who at the time of the immigration into Egypt, and during the patriarch’s life-time, were the recognized heads of families, in Israel, though **some of them, born after the departure from Canaan, could be said to have “come into Egypt” only in the persons of their fathers.**¹⁷

While all seventy mentioned in Genesis 46 may not have **literally** traveled down to Egypt, Moses, writing this account more than 215 years later, easily could have

used prolepsis to include those who would be born shortly thereafter, and who eventually (by the time of Moses) would have been “the recognized heads of families.”

DEATH AT BETH SHEMESH

1 Samuel 6:19

The Philistines wanted no more of the Ark of the Covenant. Ever since they had defeated the Israelites and captured the ark, they suffered immensely. God struck the inhabitants of Ashdod with tumors (1 Samuel 5:6). Next, He sent tumors upon the men of Gath (1 Samuel 5:8-9). Then, in Ekron, “there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. And the men who did not die were stricken with the tumors” (1 Samuel 5:11-12). The Philistines finally decided to send the once-coveted ark back to Israel on a cart pulled by two cows. Without a driver to direct the way, the cows transporting the ark went straight for the Israelite town of Beth Shemesh. Sadly, not long after the ark reached the town of Beth Shemesh, the men of the town “**looked into the ark**” and God “struck the people [Israelites] with a **great** slaughter” (1 Samuel 6:19). How many died? 50,070 men (NASB; Hebrew *'elep ch^amishiyim 'iysh shib 'iyim*).

Many have questioned the 50,070-men figure in 1 Samuel 6:19. How could that many men have looked into the Ark of the Covenant? Could that many men have even been in Beth Shemesh? Did the Bible writer just make a mistake here?

First, no one can be certain how many people were in Beth Shemesh when the Philistines returned the ark.

Although the 50,070 figure may sound too high to some, no one knows for sure if such a number was impossible. Unlikely? Perhaps. But “stranger” things have happened. How odd is it that some 200,000 people converge outside the 15,000-person town of Talladega twice a year to watch cars go in circles? How amazing is it that 75 of Abraham’s descendants grew to a family of approximately two to three million people in only about 215 years (Exodus 1:5; 12:41; Numbers 1:46). How unlikely was it for King Hezekiah to be delivered from the mighty Assyrian army? Indeed, when it looked like unavoidable defeat for the king of Judah, the Angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night (2 Kings 19:35). The point is, we must be careful dismissing with the wave of the hand any numbers found in Scripture simply because they may not sound feasible **on the surface**.

Second, what about the question regarding the likelihood of 50,000 people peering into the ark? Once again, that which some might call “unlikely” is not equivalent to the “impossible.” Furthermore, there are several things that the text does not indicate. First, we cannot know how long the ark had been in Beth Shemesh prior to God bringing judgment upon the men of the town. It could have been two days, two weeks, or two months. (Recall that the ark had previously been in the Philistines’ possession for seven months—1 Samuel 6:1.) Innumerable people could have seen the ark during this time. Second, the text does **not** indicate that 50,000 people peered into the ark at the same time. Although, if it is possible for 100,000 people to sit hundreds of feet away and watch a pigskin bounce around on a football field, and if it is possible for one million people to stand in Times Square and watch

the New Year's Eve ball drop, then 50,000 people looking into the ark at virtually the same time is not outside the realm of possibility. Still, the text simply says that the men "looked into the ark" and God "struck the people with a great slaughter" (1 Samuel 6:19). It does not say that they all looked into the ark at the exact same time.

Finally, although it cannot be proven beyond all reasonable doubt that the 50,070 figure is erroneous, there is the very real possibility that either (1) the Hebrew has been misunderstood, or (2) a copyist made an error in the transmission process. The fact is,

[N]owhere else is a figure like 50,070 written in this fashion according to the grammar of biblical **Hebrew**. Normally the wording would have been either... "seventy man and fifty thousand man" or else in the descending order—which was far more usual... "fifty thousand man and seventy man."¹⁸

"The fact that neither of these customary word orders was followed in the received Hebrew text of this passage" could possibly indicate a transmissional error.¹⁹ Some Bible translators (e.g., RSV, NIV), in fact, are so certain that the numerical figure in this passage has been corrupted through scribal transmission that they just use the 70 figure. No doubt, they believe the Hebrew should be understood the way Josephus understood it in the first century,²⁰ and the way a few Hebrew manuscripts have the number—just 70. Others, like Faussett, have explained the number, saying, "God smote in the proportion of 50 out of the 1,000, i.e. one twentieth instead of one tenth of the population...; seventy men in all, out of the population of Bethshemesh, which amounted to 1,400 in this view."²¹

It may be that no one will ever know with certainty this side of eternity whether the 50,070 figure in 1 Samuel 6:19 represents a copyist's error or a genuine, albeit extraordinary, number of Beth Shemesh inhabitants who actually died at the hand of God. Keep in mind, however, that even if a copyist did introduce an error here, that in no way reflects upon the inspired writers. [NOTE: To read our foundational discussion on copyists' errors, see chapter seven.]

HOW MANY SONS DID JESSE HAVE?

1 Samuel 16:11; 17:12; 1 Chronicles 2:13-15

A few years ago, I received a letter from a woman who was seeking an answer to a question that an unbeliever had presented to her. The question that gave her so much trouble, and that seemed to plant a seed of doubt in her mind about the inerrancy of Scripture, was this: "Did Jesse (the father of David) have seven sons or eight?" This question arises from a comparison of the information about Jesse's family in 1 Samuel 16-17, with the genealogy given in 1 Chronicles chapter 2.

First Samuel 16 states that Jesse made seven sons pass before the prophet Samuel, in hopes that God would anoint one of them as the next king of Israel (16:10). Samuel then informed Jesse that God had not chosen any of these seven sons that passed before him, but was looking for another. Of course, that other son was David, "the youngest" (16:11) of Jesse's "eight sons" (17:12). The "problem" with this information is that the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 2:13-15 specifically states that David was "the seventh" son of Jesse. How is it that David could be both the seventh son and eighth son of Jesse? Some are

eager to call this a legitimate Bible contradiction. Even many Bible students (like the one who wrote me about this question) read these statements for the first time and wonder if this is an “inconsistency in the Word.” What is the answer? How many sons did Jesse have? And was David Jesse’s eighth son or seventh?

The answer is really quite simple. One of Jesse’s sons shown to Samuel at Bethlehem must have died while young and without posterity. Thus, at one time David was the youngest of **eight** sons, and at another time he was the youngest of **seven** sons. We must keep in mind that Hebrew genealogies often included only the names of those who had some significance for future generations.²² It makes sense that if one of David’s brothers died before marrying and begetting children (or before doing something extraordinary), he would not have been mentioned.

Lest you think this situation sounds bizarre, consider the following. More than 60 years ago, whenever my father engaged in a discussion about his family, he would tell people that he had **five** brothers and two sisters. Today, when he converses with others about his family he often speaks of his **four** brothers and two sisters. Is he being dishonest when he does so? No. Sadly, when my dad was 19 years old, one of his younger brothers died in a tragic accident. Although this brother was loved deeply and is missed greatly, usually when my father is asked about his siblings he simply says: “I have **four** brothers and two sisters.” If he has time or feels there is a need, he then will mention his other brother who died at a very young age. The point is, whether my dad tells someone that he is the oldest of eight children or the oldest of seven children, he is telling the truth.

Admittedly, the Bible does not say specifically that one of David's brothers died at a young age. But, it most likely is implying such a thing when one less son is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 2:13-15. [Considering that David's three oldest brothers were warriors in Saul's army (1 Samuel 17:13ff), one certainly would not be surprised if one of David's other brothers also became a soldier and died in battle.]

To say that one of David's brothers dying at a relatively young age is not an option is to assert that the Bible does not teach by implication. [Yet, as anyone who has studied the Bible knows, it most certainly does teach by implication (cf. Acts 8:35-36).] Furthermore, if people today who have lost children or siblings can speak legitimately about their family number in two different ways, should we not also give Bible writers the same freedom in their recording of historical families?

HOW MUCH WATER COULD "THE SEA" HOLD?

1 Kings 7:26; 2 Chronicles 4:5

Almost 1,000 years before Jesus set foot on the Earth, the first temple dedicated to Jehovah was built out of Lebanon cedar (which was considered the finest wood available), costly stones, and pure gold. The Bible indicates that over 183,000 men were involved in the construction of this glorious house of worship during the reign of King Solomon (1 Kings 5:13-16). The vessels that were housed within the Temple, and those that remained in the inner court, were equally as elaborate. One of these vessels that stood on the right side of the sanctuary between

the altar and the porch of the Temple was an immense bronze basin known as “the Sea” (1 Kings 7:23). It was five cubits (7½ feet) high, 10 cubits (15 feet) in diameter at the brim, 30 cubits (45 feet) in circumference and rested on 12 bronze oxen (1 Kings 7:23-26, 39; 2 Chronicles 4:2-5,10). Unlike the 10 lesser basins that were used to bathe portions of the burnt offerings, the Sea served as a washing pool for the priests (2 Chronicles 4:6). For many years the capacity of the inner court’s large basin known as “the Sea” has been at the center of controversy. The reason: 1 Kings 7:26 indicates that it held 2,000 baths (a bath was the largest of the liquid measures in Hebrew culture; comparative estimates range from 4.5-9 U.S. gallons). However, 2 Chronicles 4:5 says that the Sea held 3,000 baths. Thus, critics of the Bible’s inerrancy have charged that a glaring contradiction exists and that such lack of agreement discredits divine authorship.

There are various possible solutions to this alleged contradiction, two of which we’ll expound upon. The first possible explanation revolves around a Hebrew word used in 2 Chronicles 4:5 that does not appear in 1 Kings 7:26. Whereas in 1 Kings it says that the molten Sea “held” (ASV) 2,000 baths, 2 Chronicles says that it “**received** (Hebrew *mach^aziyq*) **and held** three thousand baths” (ASV). The difference in phraseology may indicate that the Sea ordinarily contained 2,000 baths, but when filled to its utmost capacity it received and held 3,000 baths.²³ Thus, the chronicler informs the reader that 3,000 baths of water were required to completely fill the Sea, which usually held 2,000 baths.²⁴ Anyone who has ever been around large pools of water (like a swimming pool) knows that the pool actually

can hold a few thousand gallons of water more than generally is kept in it. It very well may be that the wording in 2 Chronicles indicates such a difference about the water level in the Sea.

A second possible solution is that the “bath” unit mentioned in 1 Kings was larger than the “bath” unit used in 2 Chronicles. Since the latter account was written after the Babylonian exile, it is quite possible that reference is made to the Babylonian bath, which might have been less than the Jewish bath used at the time of Solomon. As Adam Clarke observed: “The cubit of Moses, or of the ancient Hebrews, was longer than the Babylonian by one palm.... It might be the same with the measures of capacity; so that two thousand of the ancient Jewish baths might have been equal to three thousand of those used after the captivity.”²⁵ In considering modern-day examples, a 20% difference exists between the U.S. gallon and the Imperial gallon, even though the same term is used for both quantities. Also, the furlong of London in 1475 was 625 feet, while the furlong of the same city in 1600 was 660 feet (cf. Revelation 14:20). Thus, the alleged discrepancy between 1 Kings 7:26 and 2 Chronicles 4:5 may be simply a misunderstanding on the part of 21st-century readers.²⁶

HOW MANY TIMES DID THE ROOSTER CROW?

Matthew 26:34; Mark 14:30; Luke 22:34; John 13:38

Perhaps the most famous alleged Bible contradiction centers on Peter’s triple denial of Jesus and the crowing of a rooster. For years, skeptics have charged that Mark’s

account of this event blatantly contradicts the other gospel accounts. Even Bible believers have questioned the differences surrounding this event, yet relatively few have taken the time to understand them. This lack of understanding and poor defense of God's Word has led skeptics to become more confident in their position (that the Bible is not God's Word) and has caused some Bible believers to abandon their position on the infallibility of the Scriptures.

The passages in question are found in Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and John 13. Matthew, Luke, and John all quoted Jesus as saying that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed.

Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times" (Matthew 26:34).

Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me" (Luke 22:34).

Jesus answered him... "Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times" (John 13:38).

After the third denial actually took place, these three writers recorded that Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled exactly the way He said it would be.

Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times" (Matthew 26:74b-75).

Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how

He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times” (Luke 22:60b-61).

Peter then denied again [for the third time]; and immediately a rooster crowed (John 18:27).

Matthew, Luke, and John all indicated that Peter denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed; Mark’s account, however, says otherwise. He recorded Jesus’ prophecy as follows: “Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows **twice**, you will deny Me three times” (Mark 14:30). Following Peter’s first denial of Jesus, we learn that he “went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed” (Mark 14:68). After Peter’s third denial of Jesus, the rooster crowed “a second time.... Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times’” (Mark 14:72).

Mark differs from the other writers in that he specifies the rooster crowed once after Peter’s first denial and again after his third denial. But, do these differences represent a legitimate contradiction? Do they indicate, as some critics charge, that the Bible is not from God?

Consider the following illustration: A mother drops off her two elementary-age children on the first day of a new school year. Her oldest son, Chris, is in the fifth grade and knows the routine quite well—for the last five years he’s met his mother right after school on the backside of the playground. Mom says to Chris: “I’ll see you right after **the bell** rings.” Mom then turns to Ryan, her youngest son, who is going into Kindergarten, and says, “Ryan, I’ll see you after the **eighth bell**.” After the eighth bell? She told Chris after “the bell.” Did the mother contradict

herself? Not at all. During a normal school day at Chris and Ryan's school there are eight bells that ring. However, when the mother said to Chris, "after **the bell**," they both knew she meant the "main bell"—the final bell that announces the end of the school day. Ryan, on the other hand, having never been to a day of school in his life, was given different instructions. Had he been told "after the bell," he might have gotten ready to go home after hearing the first bell of a school day. In a more precise way, the mother instructed her son that they would meet up, not after the first, second, third, etc. bell, but after the eighth—the final bell. No fair-minded person would consider the mother's instructions as contradictory.

In a similar way, no one should assume that because three of the gospel writers mentioned one crowing, while Mark mentioned two crowings, that a contradiction exists. In actuality, there were two "rooster crowings." However, it was the second one (the only one Matthew, Luke, and John mentioned) that was the "main" crowing (like the fourth buzzer is the "main" buzzer at a basketball game). In the first century, roosters were accustomed to crowing at least twice during the night. The first crowing (which only Mark mentioned—14:68) usually occurred between twelve and one o'clock. Relatively few people ever heard or acknowledged this crowing.²⁷ Likely, Peter never heard it; else surely his slumbering conscience would have awakened.

The second crowing took place not long before daybreak. It was this latter crowing that was commonly called "the cockcrowing." Why? Because it was at this time of night (just before daybreak) that roosters crowed the loudest, and their "shrill clarion" was useful

in summoning laborers to work.²⁸ This crowing of the roosters served as an alarm clock to the ancient world. Mark recorded earlier in his gospel account that Jesus spoke of this “main” crowing when He stated: “Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, **at the crowing of the rooster**, or in the morning” (Mark 13:35). Interestingly, even when workers were called to work via artificial devices (e.g., bugles), this time of the night still was designated by the proverbial phrase, “the cockcrowing.” If you lived in the first century and your boss said to be ready to work when “the rooster crows,” you would know he meant that work begins just before daybreak. If he said work begins at the second crowing of the rooster, likewise, you would know he meant the same thing—work begins just before daylight. These are not contradictory statements, but two ways of saying the same thing.

When Jesus said, “[B]efore the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times” (Matthew 26:34), He was using “the rooster crows” in the more conventional way. Mark, on the other hand, specified that there were two crowings. In the same way that a mother tells her youngest son more detailed instructions concerning after-school pick-up, Mark used greater precision in recording this event. It may be that Mark quoted the exact words of Jesus, while the other writers (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) saw fit to employ the less definite style to indicate the same time of night.²⁹ Or, perhaps Jesus made both statements. After Peter declared that he never would deny the Lord, Jesus could have repeated His first statement and added another detail, saying:

“[E]ven this night, before the rooster crows **twice**, you will deny Me three times” (Mark 14:30). We cannot be sure why Mark’s account is worded differently than the other writers, but by understanding that “the rooster crowing” commonly was used to indicate a time just before daybreak, we can be assured that no contradiction exists among the gospel writers.

23,000 OR 24,000?

1 Corinthians 10:8; Numbers 25:9

In 1 Corinthians 10:7-10, the apostle Paul gave four “examples” of how God’s chosen people in the Old Testament sinned by lusting “after evil things” (vs. 6). At one time or another, the Israelites had been guilty of worshipping false gods (vs. 7), committing sexual immorality (vs. 8), as well as tempting God and complaining against the Almighty (vss. 9-10). It is the second example Paul provided in this list (involving the Israelites’ sexual immorality) that has been the brunt of much criticism. Allegedly this verse is in direct opposition with what Moses recorded in the Pentateuch. Whereas Paul stated, “[I]n one day twenty-three thousand [Israelites] fell” as a result of their sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 10:8), Moses recorded that “those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand” (Numbers 25:9).

Some apologists³⁰ have attempted to resolve this case of “the missing thousand” by claiming that the Old Testament event to which Paul alluded was the plague God sent upon the people after they made a golden calf (Exodus 32:35), and not the plague recorded in Numbers 25:9. The problem with this explanation is that the Israelites’ sin in Exodus 32 was idolatry, not the sexual immorality of which Paul says that the 23,000 were

guilty (1 Corinthians 10:8). Although idolatry sometimes included sexual immorality, most likely Paul was not referring to the events that took place after Moses' descent from Mount Sinai (Exodus 32).

Others believe that Numbers 25:9 is, indeed, the actual "sister" passage to 1 Corinthians 10:8, but that the additional 1,000 in the book of Numbers also included those whom the judges executed (Numbers 25:4-5).³¹ Or, it may be that Paul's number only included the portion of those who were actually guilty of "sexual immorality," while Moses included both harlots **and** idolaters (Numbers 25:1-3).

Another plausible (and perhaps most likely) explanation for the difference in these numbers lies in the fact that Paul stated 23,000 fell "**in one day**," while in Numbers 25 Moses wrote that the **total number** of those who died in the plague was 24,000. Moses never indicated how long it took for the 24,000 to die; rather, he only stated that this was the number "who died in the plague."³² Thus, the record in 1 Corinthians simply supplies us with more knowledge about what occurred in Numbers 25: 23,000 of the 24,000 who died in the plague died "in one day."

Several years ago, the Kerrville, Texas *Daily Times* online newspaper published two stories on their front page about the same basic event—the Texas Associated Press Managing Editors' meeting in Galveston, Texas. The headline for the first story was "Times Wins **17 Awards** in Statewide Contest."³³ The second story was titled, "Times Gets **16 Awards** in First Day."³⁴ One story clearly indicated that the newspaper had won 16 awards,

while the other used the number 17. Apparently, however, none of the Kerrville *Daily Times* staff believed that their stories were contradictory. (The stories remained on the *Daily Times* homepage for a few days.) What's more, there was no indication that others were accusing the newspaper of being inconsistent or dishonest in their reporting. Why? Because most anyone who read the two titles quickly understood that the newspaper won 17 awards in all—16 of which they collected on the meeting's "**first day.**"

If most anyone can easily understand and accept such differences as were found on the Kerrville *Daily Times* website, one wonders why similar logical differences cannot easily be acknowledged in Scripture.

It is troubling to see how some scholars and apologists attempt to explain the alleged contradiction between 1 Corinthians 10:8 and Numbers 25:9. In the popular book *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, Peter Davids (one of four contributing writers to the volume) made the following comments regarding "the missing thousand" in 1 Corinthians 10:8:

It is possible that Paul, citing the Old Testament from memory as he wrote to the Corinthians, referred to the incident in Numbers 25:9, but **his mind slipped** a chapter later in picking up the number.... [W]e cannot rule out the possibility that there was some reference to 23 or 23,000 in his local environment as he was writing and that caused a **slip in his mind.**³⁵

Paul was not attempting to instruct people on Old Testament history and certainly not on the details of Old Testament history.³⁶

Thus here we have a case in which **Paul apparently makes a slip of the mind** for some reason (unless he has special revelation he does not inform us about), but the mental error does not affect the teaching. How often have we heard preachers with written Bibles before them make similar errors of details that in no way affected their message? If we notice it (and few usually do), we (hopefully) simply smile and focus on the real point being made. As noted above, Paul probably did not have a written Bible to check (although at times he apparently had access to scrolls of the Old Testament), but in the full swing of dictation **he cited an example from memory and got a detail wrong.**³⁷

Supposedly, Paul just made a mistake. He messed up, just like when a preacher today mistakenly misquotes a passage of Scripture. According to the repetitious testimony of Davids, Paul merely had “a slip of the mind” (experiencing what some today might call a “senior moment”), and our reaction (as well as the skeptics’) should be to “simply smile and focus on the real point being made.”

Unbelievable! Davids contributes to the publication of an 800-page book, which attempts to answer numerous alleged Bible contradictions and to defend the integrity of the Bible,³⁸ and yet in this instance he simply says that the apostle Paul “cited an example from memory and got a detail wrong.” Why would Davids (and the other contributing writers)³⁹ spend so much time (and space) answering the numerous questions that skeptics often raise, and then (at least Davids) conclude that the man who penned about half of the New Testament books made mistakes in his writings?! Davids has concluded exactly what the infidel teaches—Bible writers made

mistakes. Furthermore, if Paul made one mistake in his writings, he easily could have blundered elsewhere. And if Paul made mistakes in other writings, how can we say that Peter, John, Isaiah, and others did not “slip-up” occasionally? The fact is, if Paul or any of these men made mistakes in their writings, then they were not inspired by God (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21), for God does not make mistakes (cf. Titus 1:2; Psalm 139:1-6). And if the Scriptures were not “given by inspiration of God,” then the Bible is not from God. And if the Bible is not from God, then the skeptic is right. But as we noted earlier, the skeptic is not right! First Corinthians 10:8 can be explained logically—without assuming that Paul’s writings are inaccurate.

Sadly, Peter Davids seems to have totally dismissed the numerous places where Paul claimed his writings were from God. When Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia, he told them that his teachings came to him “through the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:12). In his first letter to the Thessalonian church, he claimed that the words he wrote were “by the word of the Lord” (4:15). To the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote that God’s message was “revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets” (3:5). In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter put Paul’s letters on a par with the Old Testament Scriptures when he compared them to “the rest of the Scriptures.” And in the same epistle where Davids claims Paul “makes a slip of the mind,” Paul said, “the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Paul did not invent facts about Old Testament stories. Neither did he have to rely on his own cognizance to

remember particular numbers or names. The Holy Spirit revealed the Truth to him—all of it (cf. John 14:26; John 16:13). Just like the writers of the Old Testament, Paul was fully inspired by the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Samuel 23:2; Acts 1:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:15-16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The fact is, several plausible explanations exist for the differences between Numbers 25:9 and 1 Corinthians 10:8. Exactly what the precise explanation for the difference is, we may never know. But, we can know that neither the skeptic nor the liberal Bible scholar has proven these passages to be discrepant. Furthermore, it is the critic of this passage who should be questioned as to why he would readily accept the understandable, non-discrepant differences in many modern-day writings (e.g., the Kerrville *Daily Times*), yet loudly protest against similar logical, explainable differences in Scripture. Undoubtedly, it is this kind of “inconsistent” allegation that should be under scrutiny.

THE “TWELVE”?

1 Corinthians 15:5; Matthew 27:5; Acts 1:15-26

Numerous alleged Bible discrepancies arise because skeptics frequently interpret figurative language in a literal fashion. They treat God’s Word as if it were a dissertation on the Pythagorean theorem rather than a book written using ordinary language. They fail to recognize the inspired writers’ use of sarcasm, hyperbole, prolepsis, irony, etc. Such is the case in their interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:5. Since Paul stated that “the twelve” (apostles) saw Jesus after His resurrection, these critics claim that Paul clearly erred because there were not “twelve” apostles after Jesus’ resurrection and before

His ascension. There actually were only eleven apostles during that time. [Judas already had committed suicide (Matthew 27:5), and Matthias was not chosen as an apostle until after Jesus' ascension into heaven (Acts 1:15-26).] Skeptics claim Paul's use of the term "twelve" when speaking about "eleven" clearly shows that the Bible was not "given by inspiration of God."

One possible, simple solution to this numbering "problem" is that "the twelve" to which Paul referred was not a literal number, but the designation of an office. This term is used merely "to point out the society of the apostles, who, though at this time they were only eleven, were still called the twelve, because this was their original number, and a number which was afterward filled up."⁴⁰ Gordon Fee stated that Paul's use of the term "twelve" in 1 Corinthians 15:4 "is a clear indication that in the early going this was a **title** given to the special group of twelve whom Jesus called to 'be with him' (Mark 3:14). Thus this is their collective designation; it does not imply that all twelve were on hand, since the evidence indicates otherwise."⁴¹

This figurative use of numbers is just as common in English vernacular as it was in the ancient languages. In collegiate sports, one can read about the Big 10 conference, which currently consists of 14 teams, or the Big 12 conference, which is made up of 10 teams. At one time these conferences only had 10 and 12 teams respectively. However, when they exceeded or reduced the stated number of teams, they kept their original conference "names." Their names (original numbers) are (now) designations for particular conferences, not literal numbers. In 1884, the term "two-by-four" was

coined to refer to a piece of lumber two-by-four inches. Interestingly, a two-by-four is still called a two-by-four, even when it is trimmed to slightly smaller dimensions (1 5/8 by 3 5/8). Again, the numbers are more of a designation than a literal number.

Critics like Steve Wells, author of *The Skeptic's Annotated Bible*, misrepresent the text when they claim Paul taught: "Jesus was seen by **all** twelve apostles (**including Judas**) after Judas' suicide and before Jesus' ascension."⁴² Paul did not teach that Jesus was seen by **all** twelve of the **original** apostles (including Judas). The text simply says Jesus "was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve." As already noted, skeptics reject the explanation that Paul used the term "twelve" in a figurative sense (yet they must admit that such numbers can be, and frequently are, used in such a way). These critics also disregard another legitimate explanation: that "the twelve" may have included Matthias, the apostle who took Judas' place (Acts 1:15-26).

Matthias had been chosen as one of the apostles long before Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, and we know he was a witness of the resurrection of Christ (cf. Acts 1:21-22). In fact, it is very likely that he was part of the group that "gathered together" with the apostles when Christ appeared to them after His resurrection (cf. Luke 24:33). When Paul wrote of "the twelve," it may be that he was using a literary device known as prolepsis.⁴³ Thus, no one can say for sure that Matthias was not included in "the twelve" mentioned by Paul.

Does Paul's reference to "the twelve" in 1 Corinthians 15:5 contradict Jesus' appearances to ten of the apostles on

one occasion (John 20:19-24) and eleven on another (John 20:26-29)? Not at all. Either he simply used a figure of speech common to all languages—where several persons (or groups) who act as colleagues are called by a number rather than a name—or he was including Matthias.

Chapter 5



ALLEGED GEOGRAPHICAL CONTRADICTIONS

DID KING JOSIAH DIE IN MEGIDDO OR JERUSALEM?

2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chronicles 35:23-24

According to skeptics, the writers of Kings and Chronicles were contradictory in their recording of where King Josiah died. Popular skeptic Steve Wells lists 2 Kings 23:29-30 and 2 Chronicles 35:23-24 as #253 in his list of “contradictions” in the Bible,¹ while the website 1001biblecontradictions.com cataloged these verses as “contradiction” #250.² Dennis McKinsey highlighted these verses in one of the early issues of his journal *Biblical Errancy*, claiming they represented one of the “simple, straight-forward problems” of the Bible.³ So what, exactly, do these verses say?

According to 2 Kings 23:29-30:

In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And **Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo** when he confronted him. Then his servants moved his body in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.

On the other hand, 2 Chronicles 35:23-24 reads:

And **the archers shot King Josiah**; and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am severely wounded." His servants therefore took him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had, and **they brought him to Jerusalem. So he died**, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.

Is there actually a contradiction between these passages, or is there merely an unfair desire for them to contradict without real proof of such discrepancy? As is the case with most allegations of biblical inconsistencies, once again skeptics **assume** (1) the worst, and (2) much more than they can ever prove.

The two accounts of the death of Josiah are not contradictory but supplementary. Just as reading multiple reports of a current news event should give the reader a more robust view of things, reading both accounts of Josiah's death give us a fuller picture, not a discrepant one. Though Pharaoh Necho had no quarrels (at least on this occasion) with Josiah and his army (2 Chronicles

35:20-21), nevertheless Josiah ignored “the words of Necho from the mouth of God” (2 Chronicles 35:22). The King of Judah foolishly “disguised himself” and went “to fight in the Valley of Megiddo” (2 Chronicles 35:22), where Pharaoh Necho “killed him” (2 Kings 23:29). The chronicler details that it was **the archers** (under Pharaoh’s authority) who shot Josiah (35:23). This difference is not one generally highlighted by skeptics as a contradiction between the two accounts. Most fair-minded people understand that a “king,” “president,” or some other ruler may be said to “do something” when, in actuality, he gave the command for it to be done. That is, it was done under his authority and thus (in one legitimate sense) “by him.” If skeptics can seemingly concede the sensibleness in this difference between Kings and Chronicles, one wonders why they will not also consider possible, rational explanations for other differences by two different, independent writers of two different historical accounts?

Could it be that the phrase in 2 Kings 23:29 that “Pharaoh Necho killed him at Megiddo” means nothing more than it was at Megiddo that King Josiah received his mortal blow, but that his heart actually stopped beating somewhere else, sometime later? Suppose a man is shot on Main Street but is not pronounced dead until he’s in an ambulance, halfway to the hospital. Can one not truthfully say (in one sense) that the man was killed on Main Street—that he received his “dying blow” there, though his brain activity did not technically stop until he was in the ambulance or perhaps at the hospital? Surely to ask is to answer. Admittedly, a few translations word 2 Kings 23:30 as Josiah being “carried...in a chariot dead

(*meeth*) from Megiddo” (KJV), but, as John Haley noted many years ago, the Hebrew term *meeth* can mean “dying or in a dying state.”⁴

Furthermore, simply because the chronicler noted “[s]o he [Josiah] died” **after** he mentioned that Josiah’s servants “brought him to Jerusalem” (2 Chronicles 35:24) is not proof that Josiah actually died in Jerusalem. As E.M. Zerr observed in his *Bible Commentary*: “The statement **and he died**...is just a common form of expression in the Bible, where the several facts of a circumstance may be named with very little regard for their chronological order.”⁵ Indeed, the chronicler is merely stating the **fact** that Josiah died and not exactly **when** he died. As we note in volume 2 chapter 5 of *The Anvil Rings*, Bible writers often recorded their material topically or climactically, and not necessarily chronologically. We should no more assume the chronicler was writing strictly sequentially in 2 Chronicles 35:24 than we should when we ask our spouse to tell us how his or her day went. (What reasonable person would criticize others for not telling various events in chronological order if that was not their stated intention?)

The fact that Dennis McKinsey thought so much of the question regarding where Josiah died, even contending it is one of the “simple, straight-forward problems” of the Bible, should be an indication of just how weak his case (and others’) is against the Bible. Scripture reveals that Josiah died after receiving his “death blow” in battle at Megiddo. Precisely when and where he took his final breath, we do not know, nor do we have to know to exonerate the Bible writers of any proven error in their penning of Scripture.

JESUS' SERMON ON...THE MOUNT OR THE PLAIN?

Matthew 5:1; Luke 6:17

In the introductory comments to Jesus' oft-quoted sermon recorded in Matthew chapters 5-7, the first verse sets the stage for His "astonishing teachings." Matthew indicated that "seeing the multitudes," Jesus "went up **on a mountain**, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him." When Luke gave the setting for Jesus' masterful sermon, he stated that Jesus "came down with them and stood **on a level place**." The question that has been asked by many people is why Matthew recorded Jesus preaching this sermon from a **mountain**, while Luke said it was while He stood on a **level place**. Could Matthew or Luke have made a legitimate geographical error here, or is there a reasonable explanation for the difference that exists?

First of all, for these passages to be contradictory one must assume that the two sermons were delivered at the same place and at the same time. But, as H. Leo Boles stated in his commentary on Luke, this sermon "may have been repeated a number of times and Luke gives a record of the sermon which was repeated at some later time than the record given by Matthew."⁶ It certainly is possible that Jesus repeated His teachings on various occasions. He easily could have preached the beatitudes in Capernaum as well as in Cana. He could have taught the model prayer in both Bethany and Bethsaida. Who are we to say that Jesus preached the principles and commands found in Matthew 5-7 **only once**? There are some men today who travel to different cities throughout

the year and often preach the same sermons—and do so effectively. Could Jesus not have done something similar?

Perhaps a more likely solution to this geographical “problem” is simply to understand that Matthew and Luke were referring to the same sermon, and that Jesus was preaching it while being both on a mountain and on a “plain” (KJV) at the same time. The word “plain” (*tóπου πεδινόυ*) simply means “level place,”⁷ and is translated thusly in nearly all modern versions of the Bible. Since a mountain can have level places on it, no one can assert logically that Matthew 5:1 and Luke 6:17 are contradictory. I have been to the top of a mountain in Anchorage, Alaska, that is so level it is known as “Flattop Mountain.” To say Jesus stood on a **level place** on a **mountain** is no oxymoron.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

Mark 1:29; John 1:44; Matthew 2:1; Acts 22:8

Although it sounds like an easy question, for a growing number of people it is becoming more and more difficult to answer: Where are you from? Ask the 18-year-old college freshman who grew up in a military family where she is from, and you likely will hear her rattle off five or six different states (and perhaps even a few countries). Ask the son of a Major League baseball player (who has played for eight different teams in his 20-year career) where he is from, and you might hear him respond by saying, “I was reared in a lot of places.” Ask a preacher’s kid where he was reared, and you likely will hear the same response.

It seems like the longer I live, the more problems I have telling people “where I’m from.” I was born in Macon, Georgia, moved to Tennessee for five years, then back to Georgia for two, to Oklahoma for the next twelve, and then back to Tennessee (in three different cities) for the next six years. I now live in Alabama. Today, when someone asks me, “Where are you from?” I must confess that I sometimes do not know what to say. “The last move I made was from Tennessee. I spent most of my ‘growing-up years’ in Oklahoma. I was born in Georgia, but I’ve lived the last several years of my life in Alabama.” Where am I from? Take your pick.

Some critics actually think they have a legitimate Bible contradiction on their hands by pointing out that different passages sometimes speak of the same person being from two (or more) different places. For example, in Mark 1:21-29, Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew are said to have lived in (or very near) **Capernaum**. The apostle John, on the other hand, recorded that “the city of Andrew and Peter” was **Bethsaida** (John 1:44). Are these two accounts contradictory? No. Peter and Andrew were living in Capernaum at the beginning of Jesus ministry; however, they were known as being “of” Bethsaida, which is probably where they first learned a trade, got married, and made a name for themselves. The writers are simply referring to two different times in the lives of Peter and Andrew.

A similar “controversy” surrounds whence Jesus came. Dennis McKinsey had the audacity to ask, “Why would Jesus be called ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ when He was born in Bethlehem of Judea?”⁸ Obviously, Mr. McKinsey is not willing to give the Bible writers the same freedom we

have today when we talk about our “hometown” and our “birthplace.” The fact is, Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1), but grew up in Nazareth (Matthew 2:23; cf. Acts 22:8).

Remember, for something to be a legitimate contradiction, the **same person, place, or thing** must be under consideration at the **same time** in the **same sense**. If not, then it is impossible to know that two things are contradictory.

JESUS’ BIRTH IN BETHLEHEM: FACT OR FICTION?

John 7:41-42; Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4

According to the world’s most celebrated atheist, Richard Dawkins, “the gospels are ancient fiction.”⁹ They “[a]ll have the status of legends, as factually dubious as the stories of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table”—full of “invented, made-up fiction.”¹⁰ Dawkins wonders why the “many unsophisticated Christians... who take the Bible very seriously indeed as a literal and accurate record of history and hence as evidence supporting their religious beliefs,” do not “notice those glaring contradictions” in the gospel accounts?¹¹ What kind of “contradictions,” exactly? Consider the very first one that he mentions, regarding Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem.

Supposedly, Matthew, Luke, and John give conflicting information about where Jesus was born. Dawkins wrote:

A good example of the colouring by religious agendas is the whole heart-warming legend of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem.... John’s gospel specifically remarks that his followers were surprised that he

was **not** born in Bethlehem... Matthew and Luke handle the problem differently, by deciding that Jesus **must** have been born in Bethlehem after all.¹²

Exactly where did the apostle John indicate that Jesus was “**not** born in Bethlehem?” Dawkins quoted from John 7:41-42, wherein the apostle recounts how, “**Others** said, This is the Christ. But **some** said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?” (KJV). Does this passage teach that Jesus was not born in Bethlehem? Not at all. John merely pointed out that **some** in the crowd who were listening to Jesus asked if the Messiah would come from Galilee or Bethlehem? These individuals knew that Jesus had grown up in Galilee (just as all of the gospel accounts teach: Matthew 2:22-23; Mark 1:24; 10:47; Luke 2:39-40; 4:16; John 1:45-46; 7:27). This group simply made the assumption that, because Jesus had grown up in Galilee, he was born in Galilee. But, that simply was not true (Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4). These individuals were ignorant of the place of Jesus’ birth.

Similarly, Richard Dawkins is ignorant of what constitutes a genuine contradiction, if he actually believes that this statement in John’s gospel account really contradicts what Matthew and Luke wrote. Were John to write that Jesus was **not** born in Bethlehem, or that Jesus **was** born in Galilee, only then would there be a contradiction. But John never wrote that **he believed** that Jesus was born in Galilee rather than Bethlehem. The apostle merely **reported** how **some** of those who listened to Jesus **imagined** that He was born in Galilee.

CONTROVERSIAL JERICHO

Luke 10:30; 18:35-43;

Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52

Although the city of Jericho is mentioned only seven times in the New Testament, the passages in which the city is found have been under heavy attack by critics for centuries. Perhaps the most famous alleged geographical discrepancy surrounding Jericho is found in Luke 10 where Jesus told His unforgettable parable about the Good Samaritan. Jesus began the story saying, “A certain man went **down** from Jerusalem to Jericho” (10:30). Many through the years have assumed Jesus was implying that Jericho was **south** of Jerusalem since the man “went down” to get there. However, a quick look at a map of first-century Palestine (which can be found in the back of most modern Bibles) shows that Jericho is several miles **northeast** of Jerusalem. Without looking any further into the geographical surroundings, one might assume that this represents a genuine discrepancy. After all, how can someone go “down” from point A to point B, if point B is north of point A?

As always, once all the facts are established, Jesus’ statement reconciles itself with truth quite easily. Although Jericho may be several miles **north** of Jerusalem, it is more than 3,500 feet **lower** in altitude. (Jerusalem is situated at an elevation of 2,550 feet above sea level, whereas Jericho is about 1,200 feet below sea level.) There is no way for a man to journey from Jerusalem to Jericho without going **down in elevation**. Needless to say, the argument which suggests that Jesus did not know His geography has been expelled from most skeptics’ repertoires

in modern times. I only wish such could be said of the accusations surrounding the **miracle** He worked near the city of Jericho.

The case of the healing of the blind men near Jericho (recorded in Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52, and Luke 18:35-43) has been highly criticized by skeptics. While both Mark and Luke mention the healing of only **one** blind man, Matthew records the healing of **two** men as Christ made His way to Jerusalem for the final Passover. Also, Matthew and Mark indicate that the blind men were healed as Jesus was **leaving** Jericho, whereas Luke suggests that a blind man was healed as the Lord **came near** to the city. Allegedly, these differences surrounding Jesus' miracle in the city of Jericho prove the fallibility of Bible writers.

In the first place, the fact that two of the gospel accounts mention only one blind man, while the other mentions two, need not concern us. Just because Mark and Luke speak of only one blind man does not mean that they have at the same time denied that there were two blind men. Had Mark and Luke stated that Christ healed **only one man**, while Matthew then affirmed that **more than one** were healed, a contradiction would be apparent. But such is not the case. If one says, "Tim has a son," he is not contradicted if someone else says, "Tim has a son and a daughter." His statement was merely supplemented. [Matthew is the only one who recorded that Jesus performed this healing by a touch (20:34), but he does not give us the spoken words Jesus uttered, as do Mark (10:52) and Luke (18:42).] There is no conflict, therefore, regarding the number of men involved. The accounts merely supplement one another. [This same reasoning

should be used when dealing with the **two** demoniacs Matthew mentions (8:28ff.), compared with the **one** that Mark (5:2ff.) and Luke (8:27ff.) mention.]

Moreover, the fact that Mark mentioned by name one of the blind men (Bartimaeus), and his father (Timaeus, 10:46), might possibly indicate that Mark was centering on the blind man that he knew personally. If you lived in the first century and knew one of the many people whom Jesus healed, it would be understandable that when you spoke to others about Jesus, you might mention only the **friend** whom Jesus healed. In no way is this being deceitful.

But how shall the second difficulty be resolved? Is there any logical reason as to why Matthew and Mark indicated that the blind men were healed as Jesus was **leaving** Jericho, while Luke mentioned that a blind man was healed as the Lord **came near** to the city? Actually, there are at least two realistic possibilities as to why the accounts are worded differently. First, it is possible that **three** blind men were healed in the vicinity of Jericho on this occasion. The instance mentioned by Luke as occurring when Jesus approached the city might have represented a different case than that recorded by Matthew and Mark. This explanation is supported by the fact that

Luke refers only to a “multitude” of people being present as Jesus entered the city (18:36), but both Matthew (20:29) and Mark (10:46) make a point to say there was a “great multitude” of people there by the time Jesus left the city. If the word spread of the miraculous healing on the way into the city, this would account for the swelling of the crowd.¹³

Though this suggestion about there being three blind men is considered by many to be very unlikely, it is at least possible—and a legitimate possibility is **all that is required** to negate an alleged discrepancy.

Another possible way to harmonize these passages is to understand that during this period there actually were two Jerichos. First, there was the Jericho of Old Testament history (Joshua 6:1ff.; 1 Kings 16:34) that was located at the sight of Elisha's spring. In the first century, however, that city existed as a small village lying mostly in ruins; about two miles south of that site was the new Jericho, built by Herod the Great. The Lord, therefore, traveling toward Jerusalem, would first pass through the **Old Testament Jericho**, and then, some two miles to the southwest, go through **Herodian Jericho**. Accordingly, the references of Matthew and Mark to Jesus leaving Jericho would allude to old Jericho, whereas Luke's observation of Jesus drawing near to Jericho would refer to the newer city. Hence, the miracles under consideration may have been performed **between** the two Jerichos.¹⁴ Lest you think this option is incredible, consider the town of Zugres located in eastern Ukraine. Two miles from the center of this town lies the "suburb" known as Zugres 2. What are the chances that residents living in these two towns have used language similar to that used by Matthew, Mark, and Luke?

When a person studies passages such as these (which critics allege are contradictory), one important fact should be remembered: If there is **any** reasonable way of harmonizing the records, no legitimate contradiction can be charged to the accounts. As we discussed in chapter 1, unless one can show that the same thing is

under consideration at the same time and in the same sense, then it cannot be considered a legitimate contradiction. Remember, a mere difference does not make a contradiction!

GEOGRAPHY IN GENERAL

Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-12

Have you ever stopped to consider how flexible people are when using geographical terms to describe somewhere they have been in the past or are going in the future? Perhaps you have heard friends telling about their trip to Dallas, Texas, to watch the Dallas Cowboys play football. The truth is, however, the Cowboys technically do not play in Dallas, Texas, but in Arlington, Texas. It may be that one day your family decides to take a trip to Atlanta, Georgia, to go to Six Flags. If you do, make sure you first understand that Six Flags is not exactly in Atlanta, but in Austell, Georgia.

Oftentimes, when discussing details regarding a particular geographical region (and the towns, cities, and attractions within that region), **general** terms are stated in place of an exact location. A person who lives in Sand Springs, Oklahoma, often will tell people he lives in Tulsa. Why? Because Sand Springs is a suburb of Tulsa, and more people have heard of Tulsa than Sand Springs. The same is true with nearly all suburbs of major cities. Sometimes even small “country” towns are equated with their “neighbors up the road.” My wife and I used to live in the small, west-Tennessee town of Clarksburg. Yet, even though we lived in Clarksburg, we had a Huntingdon, Tennessee, address—and the city of Huntingdon was ten miles away! When people asked

where we lived, I said Clarksburg. When they asked for our address, I told them Huntingdon. Yet, regardless of whether I said Huntingdon or Clarksburg, no one ever accused me of lying.

Considering how much “leeway” we allow ourselves today when speaking about geographical regions, it is not surprising to find Bible writers using that same freedom in the documents they wrote for regular people (just like you and me). Although skeptics also use the same approximation that Bible writers sometimes used, they arbitrarily reject the Bible writers’ information, and consider it inaccurate and uninspired. For example, in his attempt to “disprove” two biblical passages referring to the location from which Jesus ascended, skeptic Steve Wells commented: “Luke says Jesus ascended from Bethany, but Acts (1:9,12) says he ascended from Mount Olivet.”¹⁵ As is sometimes the case with skeptics, Mr. Wells misrepresented Luke. The inspired writer of the “third” gospel account actually wrote: “And He [Jesus] led them out **as far as Bethany**, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that **He was parted from them** and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50-51). Notice, he did not say that Jesus ascended “from” Bethany, but that they had gone “as far as” (*hōes pros*; literally “till over against”) Bethany, and from this point Jesus ascended into heaven. The New International Version seems to capture the real meaning of this verse, saying that Jesus took His apostles “out to the **vicinity** of Bethany” before ascending into heaven. As one can see, the text does not say that He ascended **directly** “from Bethany.”

That point aside, since **Bethany was located** just one-and-three-quarter miles from Jerusalem **on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives**,¹⁶ Luke merely used different geographical referents to establish the same location—the gospel of Luke referring to the vicinity of Bethany, whereas the book of Acts mentions specifically the Mount of Olives.

WHERE DID PETER DENY CHRIST?

Matthew 26:57-75; John 18:13-27

Did Peter deny Christ in the courtyard of Annas or Caiaphas? According to Matthew, Peter denied Jesus three times in the courtyard of Caiaphas, the high priest (26:57-75). John, however, seems to indicate that Peter was in the courtyard of Annas (Caiaphas' father-in-law) when he denied Christ (18:13-27). Which is it?

As is often the case in Scripture, the Bible writers frequently supplemented each other's accounts. Similar to how today several different, but truthful, accounts of the same event can be heard from various news sources, God gave us four **different**, reliable accounts of the **same** Gospel.

Whereas John recorded how, after Jesus' arrest, He was first taken to Annas, Matthew omits this part of the trial of Jesus, and jumps ahead to when Jesus was taken to Caiaphas. Matthew places Peter in the high priest Caiaphas' courtyard when he denied Christ three times (26:57-58,69-75). [NOTE: Both Annas and Caiaphas are referred to as the "high priest" (cf. Luke 3:2). Caiaphas served as high priest from around A.D. 18 to 36, while his father-in-law, Annas, had held this position from about

A.D. 6 to 15, “and was still called ‘high priest’ by many.”^{17]} John records the events in the following way.

- Jesus was taken to Annas (18:13)
- Peter denied Jesus the first time in the courtyard of the high priest (18:15-18)
- Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas (18:24)
- Peter denied Jesus two more times (18:25-27)

So where exactly did Peter deny Christ? Was his first denial in the courtyard of Annas, while the second and third denials took place in the courtyard of Caiaphas? If so, why do Matthew, Mark, and Luke not mention that this is where Peter’s first denial took place?

First, John does not specifically indicate that Peter’s first denial was in the courtyard of Annas. John wrote that Jesus was led

to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of **Caiaphas who was high priest** that year. Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus **into the courtyard of the high priest**. But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in (John 18:13-16).

It is assumed that because John mentions Peter’s first denial before Annas brought Jesus to Caiaphas and his second and third denials afterwards, that John was implying Peter’s first denial was in the courtyard of Annas. However, such could not be proven; the Bible writers did not always write things in a strict sequential order.

Second, it is possible that Annas was visiting his son-in-law Caiaphas, and thus were in the same palace the night Jesus was arrested. Jesus could have easily appeared before **both** of them at **different** times, while Peter was in the courtyard of the house denying his Lord. It may even be, as commentator Leon Morris proposed, that “Caiaphas and Annas shared the same palace.”¹⁸ That is, “Annas had apartments in the same palace with Caiaphas.”¹⁹

Whatever the case may be, there is no verified contradiction here. There are many possible, perfectly acceptable scenarios that might explain why John mentioned Peter’s first denial while Jesus was being questioned by Annas, and Peter’s second and third denials following Jesus’ appearance before Caiaphas.

ALL THE WORLD IN 30 YEARS?

Colossians 1:23

Only about 30 years after the Lord’s Church was established on Pentecost (Acts 2), the apostle Paul reminded the Christians in Colosse about their reconciliation in Christ. He then mentioned to them how **the Gospel had been “preached to every creature under heaven”** (Colossians 1:23). However, according to skeptics who have commented on Colossians 1:23, “Never at any time has every living person heard the gospel. Millions of people have come and gone without having had any contact whatever with Christianity or the Bible.”²⁰ Thus, Paul allegedly was mistaken and therefore not inspired by God to write to the Colossians or anyone else in the first century. Are we really to believe, as skeptic Tony Kuphaldt asked, “that the entire world had heard about Jesus at this time (about 60 A.D.)?!”²¹

The phrase *en paze ktisei* (“to every creature,” NKJV) could just as easily (and accurately) be translated “in all creation” (ESV, NASB)—that is, Paul declared that “the gospel...has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven” (Colossians 1:23, ESV). Is it possible that some 30 years after Jesus’ resurrection and the establishment of the Church that the early apostles, prophets, and evangelists had preached the Gospel “in all the world” (Colossians 1:6)—“in all creation under heaven”? Although admittedly, such a feat may seem quite unlikely, “the things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Luke 18:27). If Jesus could use His disciples to feed 5,000 men (plus the women and children) with only five loaves of bread and two fish (Matthew 14:19); if He could allow the apostle Peter to miraculously walk on water (Matthew 14:29); if God could use Peter and Paul to raise the dead (Acts 9:36-42; 20:10-12); if He could call “a man in Christ” (probably Paul) up into Paradise without killing him (2 Corinthians 12:1-6); if God could deliver His spokesmen from imprisonment and shipwreck (Acts 12:5-10; 27:13-44); if Jesus could miraculously ensure that the apostles could cast out demons, speak in tongues, and be unaffected by poisonous concoctions and venomous snakes (Mark 16:17-18; Acts 28:3-6)—it may very well be that by the time Paul wrote to the Colossians the Lord had miraculously and providentially helped Christians spread around the globe with the Gospel. After all, this was the commission given to the apostles—“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15, ESV).

Most likely, however, when Paul wrote that “the gospel” had been preached “in all the world” (Colossians 1:5-6), “to every creature under heaven” (1:23), he merely was using a figure of speech known as hyperbole (exaggeration). Consider how people today will often make the statement, “**Everyone** knows that,” yet they do not literally mean that all eight billion people on Earth actually know the subject matter being discussed. A frequent world traveler may say, “I’ve been **all over** the world,” but does not literally mean he’s been over every square mile of Earth. Similarly, the Bible writers often employed the same type of hyperbolic statements. Luke wrote that prior to the birth of Christ “a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that **all the world** should be registered.... So **all** went to be registered, **everyone** to his own city” (Luke 2:1,3). It should be obvious that Luke did not literally mean that every single person in every country on Earth (even those outside the Roman Empire) were expected to be registered. Similarly, in Acts 2:5, Luke mentioned that on the Day of Pentecost “there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, **from every nation under heaven.**” Although the Jews were dispersed in many countries around the world, it is likely that Luke merely used another hyperbolic statement to describe the various backgrounds among hundreds of thousands of Jews. There is no need to interpret Luke’s words to mean that Jews must have come from North America, South America, and Australia.

The fact is, “everyone” understands that Paul’s statement in Colossians 1:23 was intentionally exaggerated, **at least to some extent.** Even the skeptic would

not contend that by indicating the Gospel had been preached “to every **creature** under heaven,” Paul meant that all of the animal kingdom had heard the Gospel. Most likely, the skeptic would not even demand that “every creature” (or “all creation”) must include infants, the mentally ill, etc. Although “with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26), Paul’s statement was not meant to be taken strictly literally. Most likely, Paul was merely using hyperbole to communicate an astounding truth: the then-known world (of both Jews and Gentiles) had been exposed to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6



ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS PERTAINING TO TIME

DID THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES REALLY LAST 450 YEARS?

1 Kings 6:1; Acts 13:17-20

According to Acts 13:20, God gave Israel judges for “about 450 years” (NKJV). However, 1 Kings 6:1 indicates that Solomon, the third king of Israel, was in the fourth year of his reign 480 years “after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt.” When we subtract the 40-year reigns of King Saul and King David from 480 (Acts 13:21; 1 Kings 2:11), we are left with only 400 years. What’s more, if the years of the conquest of Canaan as well as the final years of Joshua and his generation were deducted from the remaining 400 years (Joshua

24:29-33; Judges 2:7-10), the period of the judges appears **far less** than the 450 years Paul stated in Acts 13:20. Was he mistaken? What can we make of the apparent conflict between these two verses?

Similar to the logical answers to other alleged Bible contradictions, this particular question can reasonably be resolved by noting the differences in Bible translations. While the King James and New King James versions (which generally follow later manuscript evidence) place the 450 years during the period of the judges (“he gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years”—NKJV), many other translations, including the ASV, NASB, ESV, RSV, and NIV, place this 450 years **before** the time of the judges. For example, consider the ESV’s translation of Acts 13:17-20:

The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. **All this took about 450 years.** And **after that** he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.

On what basis do the ESV and other translations place the 450 years **prior** to the time of judges? In short, on the manuscripts that are generally accepted as earlier and (thus usually) better. Respected Greek scholar A.T. Robertson commented on Acts 13:19-20 noting that the oldest manuscripts (i.e., those that were copied earlier in history), including the big three uncials¹ (manuscripts known as Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus),²

place the 450 years “**before** ‘after these things’ [or ‘after that’–EL] and so in verse 19. This is the true reading.”³

The 450 years that Luke recorded that Paul mentioned in his sermon in Antioch of Pisidia refers, not to the period of the judges, but to what Paul had been discussing from the beginning of his lesson (Acts 13:17) up to the point at which he noted the 450 years. And how can we logically break down these 450 years? By doing some elementary math: Abraham’s descendants were oppressed in a foreign land for 400 years (Acts 7:6); they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years (13:18); which means it took them about 10 years to conquer the seven nations in the land of Canaan and receive their inheritance (13:19). “[A]ll of which took about four hundred and fifty years” (13:19, NASB).

There is no contradiction between Acts 13:20 and 1 Kings 6:1. The question arises only because of a translation problem based on inferior manuscript evidence. The 450 years in Acts 13 covers from the oppression of Abraham’s descendants to inheriting the land of Canaan, while the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1 includes the time from Israel’s escape from Egypt, to their conquest of Canaan, to the entire period of the judges (“some three and one half centuries”),⁴ through the first 80 years of the United Kingdom (Acts 13:21; 1 Kings 2:11).

WHEN DID BAASHA REIGN?

1 Kings 16:8; 2 Chronicles 16:1

In the book of 1 Kings, we read that Baasha became the third ruler of the Northern kingdom (Israel) “[i]n the third year of Asa king of Judah...and reigned

twenty-four years” (15:33). Then, when Baasha died, his son Elah became king over Israel “[i]n the **twenty-sixth year of Asa** king of Judah” (16:8). However, 2 Chronicles 16:1 reads: “In the **thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa**, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.” The obvious question from anyone who reads these two passages is: How could Baasha be ruling over Israel in the thirty-sixth year of Asa’s reign, when 1 Kings 16 clearly indicates that Baasha had died when Asa (the third king of the southern kingdom) was only in the twenty-sixth year of his reign? Is it possible to reconcile 1 Kings 16:8 with 2 Chronicles 15:19-16:1? Or, is this a legitimate contradiction that should lead all of us to conclude that the Bible is a worthless, man-made book of myths?

There are two possible solutions to this problem. To begin with, it may be that the numbers recorded in 2 Chronicles 15:19 and 16:1 simply are the result of a copyist’s error. Although skeptics may scoff at attempts to reconcile “contradictions” by claiming a copyist must have made an error sometime in the distant past, the fact is, copyists were not infallible; inspired men were the only infallible writers. Whenever duplicates of the Old Testament Scriptures were needed, copies had to be made by hand—a meticulous, prolonged, and mentally exhausting undertaking that demanded acute awareness. History records that copyists (such as the Masoretes) had as their goal to produce accurate copies of Scripture, and that they went to great lengths to ensure fidelity in their copies. They were, nevertheless, still human. And humans are prone to make mistakes, regardless of the

care they take or the strictness of the rules under which they operate. The copyists' task was made all the more difficult by the sheer complexity of the Hebrew language, and by the various ways in which potential errors could be introduced. [See chapter seven for more information on copyists' errors.]

In their commentary on 2 Chronicles, Keil and Delitzsch proposed that the number 36 in 2 Chronicles 16:1 and the number 35 in 15:19 are a scribal error for 16 and 15, respectively. The ancient Hebrew letters *yod* and *lamed*, representing the numbers 30 and 10, could have been confused and interchanged quite easily (though inadvertently) by a copyist. Merely a smudge from excessive wear on a scroll-column, or a punctured or slightly torn manuscript, could have resulted in making the *yod* look like a *lamed*. Furthermore, it also is possible that this error occurred first in 2 Chronicles 15:19. Then to make it consistent in 16:1, a copyist may have concluded that 16 must be an error for 36 and changed it accordingly.⁵ Hence the numbers 35 and 36 could have arisen out of the original 15 and 16. With such an adjustment, the statements in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles are harmonized quite easily.

A second possibility as to why the numbers in 1 Kings 16:8 and 2 Chronicles 15:19-16:1 seem contradictory is because the numbers may refer to the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth years **after the division of the United Kingdom** (which would have been Asa's fifteenth and sixteenth years), rather than the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth years **of Asa's reign**.⁶ The Hebrew word for "reign" (*malkuwth*) also can mean "kingdom." In fact, fifty-one out of the ninety-one times this word appears

in the King James Version of the Old Testament, it is translated “kingdom” (cf. 2 Chronicles 1:1; 11:17; Nehemiah 9:35; etc.). In their commentary on 2 Chronicles, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown favored this explanation, saying, “The best Biblical critics are agreed in considering this date to be calculated from the separation of the kingdoms, and coincident with the 16th year of Asa’s reign.”⁷ [The number 16 is obtained by subtracting the reigns of Rehoboam (17 years) and Abijah (3 years) from the 36 years mentioned in 2 Chronicles 16:1.] But, as Gleason Archer recognized:

It is without parallel to refer to the kingdom of a nation as a whole and identify it thus with one particular king who comes later on in the ruling dynasty. And the fact that in its account of the later history of Judah no such usage can be instanced in Chronicles raises a formidable difficulty to this solution.⁸

First Kings 16:8 reveals that Baasha could not have ruled over Israel in the thirty-sixth year of Asa’s reign in Judah. Either the numbers 35 and 36 in 2 Chronicles 15:19-16:1 are a copyist’s error, or they represent the total number of years since the United Kingdom divided. Whichever is the case, both provide possible solutions to the alleged problem that exists between the two passages.

A COIN CALLED “DARIC”

1 Chronicles 29:7

Before Solomon began building the “holy house” of God, his father David challenged the Israelites to consecrate themselves by bringing an offering to the Lord that would be used in the temple’s construction

(1 Chronicles 29:3-5). The text says that “the leaders of the fathers’ houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king’s work, offered willingly” (29:6). They gave 5,000 talents of gold, 10,000 talents of silver, 18,000 talents of bronze, and 100,000 talents of iron. First Chronicles 29:7 also indicates that these Israelites gave 10,000 **darics** of gold.

The use of currency known as darics in a narrative that pre-dated the invention of the currency by 500 years has led some to believe that the author of Chronicles lacked divine guidance. These critics correctly assert that the daric was a coin of the Persian Empire (probably derived from Darius the Mede). Furthermore, **it is true** that even though the chronicler used the daric to evaluate a temple offering that took place around 970 B.C., this coinage was unknown to David.⁹ It was not minted before 515 B.C.,¹⁰ and probably was not known in Palestine until the fifth century B.C. (when the book of Chronicles likely was written). So why does this **not** invalidate the inerrancy of the Scriptures? After all, a narrative that has things (like money) in it that obviously did not exist when the narrative took place is nothing but a fairy tale, is it not?

Actually, the use of the term “daric” by the writer of Chronicles in the fifth century B.C. does not mean that he believed (or wanted his readers to believe) that the Israelites in David’s time possessed darics. The chronicler merely expressed—in language that would be intelligible to his readers—the sum of the gold donated by the Israelites, without intending to assume that there were darics in use in the time of David.¹¹ He simply used a

term that was popular in his own day to help his readers better understand the sacrifice of those who gave the gold (cf. Ezra 2:69; 8:27; Nehemiah 7:70-72)—a literary device known as prolepsis.

It is possible that this is not the first time the writer of Chronicles used such conversion measures. As we discussed in chapter 4, in 2 Chronicles 4:5, the text states that the molten Sea that sat in the inner court of the temple held 3,000 baths (a bath was the largest of the liquid measures in Hebrew culture). However, 1 Kings 7:26 says that the same Sea held 2,000 baths. These numbers may be different because the “bath” unit mentioned in 1 Kings was larger than the “bath” unit used in 2 Chronicles. Since the Chronicles account was written after the Babylonian exile, it is quite possible that reference is made to the Babylonian bath, which might have been less than the Jewish bath used at the time of Solomon.¹²

Admittedly, the writer of Chronicles used measures of his period familiar to modern readers, even when writing about events that took place 500 years beforehand. However, converting measures does not destroy the inerrancy of Scripture.

SIX OR EIGHT DAYS?

Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28

After Jesus prophesied during His earthly ministry that some would live to see the establishment of God’s kingdom, the first two books of the New Testament indicate **six days** expired before Peter, James, and John were led up on a high mountain to witness the

transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 16:28-17:2; Mark 9:1-2). Luke's account, on the other hand, says that Jesus' transfiguration occurred "about **eight days** after" Jesus prophesied of the approaching kingdom's establishment (9:27-29). Skeptics charge that this difference in the time that elapsed between the two events constitutes an obvious error. They profess that such textual differences should lead the honest person to admit that the Bible contains contradictions, and thus is not the infallible, inerrant Word of God.

Admittedly, at first glance it may seem to the casual reader that Luke's timeline contradicts Matthew and Mark's account of the time that elapsed between Jesus' prophecy and His transfiguration. However, a closer examination reveals that Luke never intended for his readers to understand that exactly 192 hours (eight 24-hour days) elapsed from the moment Jesus finished His prophecy to the time Jesus and the others began their ascent to the "mount of transfiguration." Luke recorded that it was "**about** eight days," not that it was eight days exactly. Although Luke was a physician (cf. Colossians 4:14), he did not use "scientific precision" in this case. He merely approximated the time separating the two events.

Furthermore, it seems clear that whereas Matthew and Mark **excluded** the days of the two terminal events (the prophecy and the transfiguration), Luke **included** both days, as well as the six intermediate days, and thus mentioned that the two events were about **eight days** apart. Even today when people rehearse something they witnessed a few days earlier, they may refer to the events as happening on "different" days. For example, if a store was robbed on a Monday afternoon, and the

following Monday morning a witness told friends what he had seen, one could say truthfully that he recalled the events six days or eight days after they occurred. If one were counting only full days, then the six would be correct (Tuesday through Sunday). But it also would be correct to speak of the events as occurring eight days earlier—if one were including both full and partial days (Monday through Monday). Whether one uses “six” or “eight” does not discredit his story. Likewise, the time difference between Matthew, Mark, and Luke in no way represents a legitimate contradiction. Luke simply used the inclusive method of reckoning time (counting the portion of a day at either end of the period), whereas Matthew and Mark counted only the complete days.¹³

EXACTLY WHEN WAS JESUS CRUCIFIED?

Mark 15:25; John 19:14

Bible critics have attempted to make much of the fact that whereas the Gospel of Mark represents Jesus being crucified at the third hour of the day, according to John’s account, the Lord was still on trial before Pilate at the sixth hour. Mark recorded: “And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was **the third hour**, and they crucified Him” (15:24-25). The apostle John wrote: “Pilate...brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat... Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and **about the sixth hour**. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’ But they cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him!

Crucify Him!” (John 19:13-15). Supposedly, Mark has Jesus on the cross three hours **before** John even has His trial completed, and thus a genuine contradiction exists because such would be logically impossible.

The fact is, however, this can only be a legitimate contradiction if one assumes that Mark and John were both using the same system of reckoning time. Consider that in 21st-century America the only reasonable explanation for the fact that a pilot can take off from Atlanta International Airport at 11:00 p.m., fly 160 miles southwest, and arrive in Montgomery, Alabama, at 10:50 p.m. **on the same day** is because **there is a time change**. Atlanta is in the Eastern Standard Time zone, while Montgomery is located within the Central Standard Time zone. Similarly, if John used a different way of calculating time than what the Jews (and certain others) normally used, it is possible for his account to supplement (rather than contradict) Mark’s testimony (as well as the other gospel writers).

Were there different ways of computing time in the first century? According to the ancient Roman author, Pliny the Elder, there were. In his encyclopedia titled *Natural History*, he wrote:

The days have been computed by different people in different ways. The Babylonians reckoned from one sunrise to the next; the Athenians from one sunset to the next; the Umbrians from noon to noon; the multitude, universally, from light to darkness; the Roman priests and those who presided over the civil day, also the Egyptians and Hipparchus, from midnight to midnight. It appears that the interval from one sunrise to the

next is less near the solstices than near the equinoxes, because the position of the zodiac is more oblique about its middle part, and more straight near the solstice.¹⁴

Whereas the Jews and certain other peoples reckoned time from sunset to sunset or sunrise to sunrise (thus making 6 p.m. or 6 a.m. the time in which a new day begins), Pliny revealed that some in the first century, including the Egyptians, Hipparchus, and “Roman priests and those who presided over the civil day,” calculated time from midnight to midnight.¹⁵ Similar to how people today living on different sides of a river or mountain range might calculate time using a different standard, not all peoples in Bible times reckoned time in exactly the same way. Although most people split the 24-hour day in half, thus having two periods of 12 hours, some, including certain Romans, considered a new day as beginning at midnight (as currently practiced in the West) rather than at 6 p.m. (which historically marked the beginning of a new day for the Jews).

So why do John and Mark differ as to Jesus’ whereabouts on the sixth hour of the day in which He was crucified? Some have suggested that the difference is due to ancient people not having clocks or watches and that John and Mark merely were approximating the time of day.¹⁶ But, since elsewhere John mentioned events surrounding the life of Jesus as occurring at hours (e.g., “tenth hour,” John 1:39; “seventh hour,” John 4:52) other than the usual four quarters of a 12-hour period (e.g., “third hour”; “sixth hour”; “ninth hour”), the explanation that John made a very broad generalization regarding Jesus’ trial and crucifixion seems unfounded. It is

more likely that the difference in times is the result of John reckoning time from midnight to midnight (characteristic of certain Romans), while Mark and the other gospel writers calculated the hours using the Jewish method (from sundown to sundown). Thus, John places Jesus before Pilate at 6 a.m. (i.e., “the sixth hour”), and Mark has him being crucified at 9 a.m. (i.e., the Jewish “third hour”).

A few statements within the fourth gospel account support the premise that John used Roman time. When he wrote about Jesus arriving at Samaria after His wearisome trip from Judea, John mentioned that Jesus arrived at the “sixth hour.” Jesus then asked for water from the woman at the well (John 4:1-7). Bearing in mind the distance He traveled, His exhaustion, and the normal evening time when people went to the well to drink and to water their animals,¹⁷ this specific hour fits better with the Roman “sixth hour,” i.e., approximately 6 p.m., than with the Jewish “sixth hour,” i.e., about noon.¹⁸ John earlier wrote about how Peter and Andrew left John the baptizer to follow Jesus. The text says, “They came and saw where He [Jesus] was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour)” (John 1:39). Regarding this passage, R.C.H. Lenski commented:

Counted in the Jewish fashion, the tenth hour would be four o’clock in the afternoon—somewhat late for the statement: *kai par autoo emeinan tan hameran ekeinan* (“and with Him abode/spent that day”), although this satisfies some. According to the Roman civil reckoning the tenth hour would be ten in the morning, and this would agree well with the statement that the two disciples remained through that day.¹⁹

Perhaps the strongest indication that the apostle John was using Roman time is seen in his allusion to the **evening** of the resurrection day, **which is still acknowledged as “the first day of the week”** (John 20:19). It seems logical to conclude that if John were using the Jewish method of calculating time, the “evening” of the resurrection day would have been considered the “second” day of the week, not the “first” day. When John 19:14 is considered in light of the fact that different ways of calculating time existed in the first century, and that elsewhere he made a variety of statements that lean toward a midnight to midnight time frame rather than 6:00 to 6:00, then the controversy surrounding the passage disappears.

What’s more, this explanation makes sense given the fact that (1) John was probably the last gospel record to be written (near the end of the first century, well after Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70), and (2) he likely wrote in or near Ephesus, the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor, during a time and at a place when the Christian church was predominantly Gentile, not Jewish. Regarding this matter, Guy N. Woods went so far as to say, “It seems absurd to think that John would use Jewish time in writing for non-Jewish readers long after the Jewish order had disappeared.”²⁰ While the word “absurd” may be a tad strong when discussing these matters, it adequately characterizes the accusation that John 19:14 and Mark 15:25 are contradictory passages.

TO GALILEE OR JERUSALEM?

Matthew 26:32; 28:7,10,16; Luke 24:33-43,49

Three times in the gospel of Matthew, the writer recorded where certain disciples of Jesus were instructed

to meet the Lord in Galilee after His resurrection. During the Passover meal that Jesus ate the night of His betrayal, He informed His disciples, saying, “[A]fter I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee” (Matthew 26:32). Three days later, on the day of Jesus’ resurrection when Mary Magdalene and the other women came to the empty tomb of Jesus, Matthew recorded how an angel told them to notify the disciples of Jesus’ resurrection, and to tell them exactly the same thing they were told three days earlier: “He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him” (28:7). Then, only three verses later, as the women were on their way to inform the disciples of Jesus’ resurrection and the message given to them by the angel, Matthew recorded how Jesus appeared to them and said: “Rejoice!... Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me” (28:9-10). Sometime thereafter, “the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them” and “worshipped Him” (28:16-17).

According to Matthew, Jesus unquestionably wanted to meet with His disciples in Galilee following His resurrection. However, some skeptics and sincere Bible students have asked why, according to Luke, Jesus met with His disciples in Jerusalem (24:33-43), and then commanded them to stay there until they were “endued with power from on high” (24:49). Does Luke’s account contradict Matthew’s? According to one Bible antagonist,

Matthew, Mark, and John have Jesus saying the disciples are to rendezvous with him in Galilee, northern Israel, about three days journey away. In contradiction to this, Luke’s two books—The Gospel

of Luke and The Book of Acts, have Jesus planning to rendezvous in Jerusalem....

In the real world, people cannot be in two places at the same time, and to claim otherwise is to be caught up in a contradiction.... The Bible, like the cheating husband, has been caught in a contradiction, exposed as a liar, and therefore can't be trusted to tell the truth.²¹

Is the skeptic right? Does the Bible place the same people in two different places "at the same time"? Where exactly did Jesus intend to meet with His disciples—in Galilee or Jerusalem?

The truth is, Jesus met with His disciples in both places, but He did so at **different** times. One of the reasons so many people allege that two or more Bible passages are contradictory is because they fail to recognize that mere differences do not necessitate a contradiction. For there to be a *bona fide* contradiction, not only must one be referring to the same person, place, or thing in the same sense, but **the same time period** must be under consideration. If a person looks at a single door in the back of a building and says, "That door is shut," but also says, "That door is open," has he contradicted himself? Not necessarily. The door may have been shut at one moment, but then opened the next by a strong gust of wind. Time and chronology are important factors to consider when dealing with alleged errors in the Bible.

Consider another illustration that more closely resembles the alleged problem posed by the skeptic. In years past, the staff members at Apologetics Press (AP) traveled to Birmingham, Alabama, for a

two-day, end-of-the-year meeting. Suppose the Executive Director reminded us of this event three days beforehand, saying, “Don’t forget about our meeting in Birmingham beginning Thursday,” and then called on the morning of the meeting as another reminder, saying, “Don’t forget about our meeting today in Birmingham.” Would someone be justified in concluding that the director had lied about the meeting if, on that Thursday morning, all of the staff at AP (including the director) showed up at work in Montgomery and carried out some of the same tasks performed on any other workday? Not at all. Actually, on the day the staff left for the annual meeting, it was common for everyone to work until about 10:30 a.m., and then depart for the meeting in Birmingham. If someone asked whether we went into work in **Montgomery** on Thursday, one honestly could say, “Yes.” If someone else asked if we traveled to **Birmingham** on Thursday for a two-day meeting, again, one could truthfully say, “Yes.” Both statements would be true. We met at both places on the same day, only at **different** times.

Similarly, Jesus met with His disciples **both** in Jerusalem and in Galilee, but at different times. On the day of His resurrection, He met with all of the apostles (except Thomas) in Jerusalem, just as both Luke and John recorded (Luke 24:33-43; John 20:19-25). Since Jesus was on the Earth for only 40 days following His resurrection (cf. Acts 1:3), sometime between this meeting with His apostles in Jerusalem and His ascension more than five weeks later, Jesus met with seven of His disciples at the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee (John 21:1-14), and later with all 11 of the apostles on

a mountain in Galilee that Jesus earlier had appointed for them (Matthew 28:16). Sometime following these meetings in Galilee, Jesus and His disciples traveled back to Judea, where He ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives near Bethany (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12).

None of the accounts of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances contradicts another. Rather, each writer supplemented what a different writer left out. Jesus may have appeared to the disciples a number of times during the forty days on Earth after His resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-7), while the New Testament writers mentioned only the more prominent instances in order to substantiate the fact of His resurrection.

Still, one may ask, "Why did Jesus command His apostles to 'tarry in the city of Jerusalem' on the day of His resurrection until they were 'endued with power from on high' (Luke 24:49), if He really wanted them to meet Him in Galilee?" Actually, it is an assumption to assert that Jesus made the above statement on the same day that He arose from the grave. We must keep in mind as we study the Bible that it normally is not as concerned about chronology as modern-day writings. Frequently (especially in the gospel accounts), writers went from one subject to the next without giving the actual time or the exact order in which something was done or taught (cf. Luke 4:1-13; Matthew 4:1-11). In Luke 24, the writer omitted the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in Galilee (mentioned by both Matthew and John). However, notice that he never stated that Jesus remained **only** in Jerusalem from the day He rose from the grave until the day He ascended into heaven.

According to Luke 24 verses 1,13,21,29, and 33, the events recorded in the first forty-three verses of that chapter all took place on the very day of Jesus' resurrection. The last four verses of Luke 24 (vss. 50-53), however, took place (according to Luke) more than five weeks later (cf. Acts 1:1-12). But what about verses 44-49? When were these statements made? The truth is, no one can know for sure. Luke gives no indication (as he did in the preceding verses) that this particular section took place "on the first day of the week" (24:1), or on "the third day" since Jesus' crucifixion (24:21). All we know is that verses 44-49 took place sometime before He ascended into heaven (vss. 50-51). Simply because Luke used the Greek conjunctive particle *de* [translated "and" (ASV), "then" (NKJV), and "now" (NASB)] to begin verse 44, does not necessarily denote a close connection between the two verses, but only a general continuation of the account and a brief statement of what Jesus said. Even though many 21st-century readers assume that the events recorded in Luke 24:44-49 occurred on the very day Jesus rose from the grave, the text actually is silent on the matter.

The burden of proof is on the Bible critic to verify his allegation. Although the skeptic quoted earlier compared the Bible to a "cheating husband" who "has been caught in a contradiction," one must remember how equally deplorable it is to draw up charges of marital unfaithfulness when there is no proof of such. In reality, the Bible should be likened to a faithful husband who has been wrongfully accused of infidelity by prejudiced, overbearing skeptics whose case is based upon unproven assumptions.

WHEN DID PAUL GO TO JERUSALEM?

Acts 9:22-26; Galatians 1:16

Three times in the book of Acts, the Bible student is informed that after Saul's conversion to Christ in Damascus, he departed for Jerusalem. According to Acts chapter 9, Saul (also called Paul) "increased all the more in strength" following his baptism into Christ, and "confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus" (vs. 22). Then, when "many days were past...the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket" for fear of the Jews (vss. 23,25). Immediately following these verses, the text reads: "**And when Saul had come to Jerusalem**, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple" (vs. 26). Add to these verses Paul's respective statements to the Jerusalem mob (Acts 22:17) and to King Agrippa (Acts 26:20) regarding his journey from Damascus to Jerusalem, and Bible students get the impression that shortly after Paul's conversion in Damascus, he journeyed to Jerusalem. The problem with this reasoning is that Paul later wrote to the churches of Galatia, and indicated that he "did not immediately...go up to Jerusalem" following his calling to Christ (Galatians 1:16-17). Rather, he went to Arabia, back to Damascus, and then **after three years** he went up to Jerusalem (1:17-18). [NOTE: "Arabia" generally is taken as a reference to the vast peninsula which bears that name. Its northwestern boundaries reached almost to Damascus.]²² Concerned Bible students want to know how these passages are harmonized? Did Paul go straight to Jerusalem shortly after his conversion, or three years later?

Although Acts chapters 9, 22, and 26 all indicate that Paul went from Damascus to Jerusalem after he became a Christian, one must realize that none of these passages specifically says that Paul went **straight** from Damascus to Jerusalem. It only says, “And **when** Saul had come to Jerusalem...” The writer of Acts gives no time limitations here. In fact, nowhere in the New Testament will a person find a statement denying that three years expired between Paul’s conversion and his first trip to Jerusalem as a Christian. Although rarely emphasized, what the Bible does **not** say regarding Paul’s journeys is very important—it proves that the alleged contradiction is based only on speculation, and not on a fair representation of the Scriptures.

Some question why Paul did not mention his trip to Arabia to preach among the Gentiles when he spoke to the Jewish mob in Jerusalem, and later to King Agrippa. Was it not a vital piece of information? Did he just “forget” about this part of his life? Actually, Paul had a good reason for not mentioning his trip to Arabia—he was speaking to Jews who were “seeking to kill him” because of his dealings with Gentiles (Acts 21:28-31). As a way of comparison, we can understand why a college football player who transferred from a rival school may not talk to his current teammates about his former college experiences, or why a new sales representative who transferred from a competing company may refrain from talking to current customers and/or coworkers about the three years he spent with the rival company. In a similar way, it did not aid Paul’s cause to mention at the very outset of his speech that some of his first work for the Lord was done among the Gentiles. (The Jews

hated Paul for his dealings with the Gentiles. The events recorded in Acts 21 alone are proof of such hatred.) Certain situations simply warrant silence on a subject, rather than an exhaustive detailing of historical facts. Paul did not lie (to the Jerusalem mob or to King Agrippa) about his past experience working with the Gentiles for a time; he merely **omitted** this piece of information in his efforts to show his fellow Jews that the very people among whom he had been a loyal persecutor were those to whom he now preached.

The 21st-century reader must remember that a Bible writer (or a speaker whom a Bible writer quotes) may be writing/speaking from one point of view, and raise a point that may not be made in another situation. Neither Paul in his speeches, nor Luke in penning the book of Acts to Theophilus, saw a need to mention Paul's journey to Arabia. In his letter to the churches of Galatia, however, Paul was dealing with Judaizers who taught that one had to keep the Law of Moses to be saved, and who wished to discredit Paul as an apostle. Paul thus wrote to tell them that after his conversion, he preached among the Gentiles for an extended amount of time **before ever meeting with another apostle**. Paul did not hurry off to Jerusalem to get instruction and approval from the Twelve. In defense of his apostolic credentials to the churches of Galatia, Paul mentioned his delayed journey to Jerusalem in order to emphasize (among other things) his genuine apostleship, whose message and authority came from Almighty God, and not from the twelve apostles, or any other person.

Chapter 7



INSPIRED WRITERS AND COMPETENT COPYISTS

If you were to open your Bible and read Mark 14:16, you would learn that Jesus' disciples went into Jerusalem to prepare the final Passover meal before His crucifixion. The wording of the verse is as follows: "So His disciples went out, **and** came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover." The highlighted conjunction "and" (*kai* in Greek) is found in the Greek manuscripts of Mark. It also appears in most English translations of the Bible. However, in one particular copy of the Bible that I possess, the stem of the "d" in "and" is missing, causing the word to be misspelled: "So His disciples went out, **ano** came into the city..."

When most people read Jesus' parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14), they learn of the king asking one

particular attendee a very specific question: “Friend, **how** did you come in here without a wedding garment?” (vs. 12). A colleague of mine has a reliable translation of the Bible that words Jesus’ question as follows: “Friend, **now** did you come in here without a wedding garment?” Obviously, the “now” should be “how” (Greek *pos*). Similar to how the “d” in “and” was skewed so as to look more like an “o,” the “h” in “how” lost its stem causing it to look more like an “n.” Question: Whose fault is it that “and” has been incorrectly printed as “ano,” and “how” has been errantly copied as “now”?

Surely no one would blame such errors in a modern English copy of the Bible on God or His inspired penmen. Almost everyone recognizes that publishing companies are responsible for such minute mistakes. Although the accurate reproduction of books has been nearly perfected during the past few centuries (thanks in large part to the invention of the printing press), still, for various reasons, slight errors can creep onto the printed page. God did not intervene and miraculously keep the aforementioned errors from appearing in copies of His Word. Instead, He gave humankind the ability and resources to understand that such errors can be resolved rationally without assuming the inspired writers erred. We know that “ano” should be “and” in Mark 14:16 and “now” should be “how” in Matthew 22:12 partly because millions of other copies of the Bible (in both English and Greek) have the correct words “and” (*kai*) and “how” (*pos*), and also because we easily can see how a printing press might occasionally leave off the stems of certain letters.

COMMON SENSE AND COPYISTS' ERRORS

One of the most popular books of the 21st-century has been Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*. Since 2003, some 50 million copies of this book have been sold worldwide.¹ Imagine for a moment the potential differences in the millions of copies of *The Da Vinci Code* if, instead of being printed on a press, they all were reproduced by hand. No doubt, many copyists' errors would have been made. Occasionally, names would have been misspelled, numbers would have been inverted, and there would have been the occasional duplication or omission of words or entire lines. However, if several million copies of *The Da Vinci Code* were retrieved from all over the world, and then compared, contrasted, and critiqued by hundreds of scholars over several decades in an effort to recover the precise wording of Dan Brown's original manuscript, the text, in effect, would be restored to its original condition. Most copyists' errors would be weeded out. Through textual criticism, the text of *The Da Vinci Code* would eventually be restored.

Whether one is referring to secular works or the Bible, prior to the invention of the printing press, copies of books were made by hand, and thus were susceptible to errors. In the 19th century, respected Christian scholar J.W. McGarvey noted: "There is not a writing of antiquity which has come down to our age without many such changes."² In fact, "[a] large part of the labor of the editors of Greek and Latin classics consists in correcting as best they can the erroneous readings thus introduced into these works."³ Take, for instance, the comedies of Terence (c. 190-158 B.C.). Seventeenth century English scholar

Richard Bentley noted how Terence's works were some of the better preserved classical texts, yet Bentley testified that he had witnessed "twenty thousand various lections [readings—EL] in that little author, not near so big as the whole New Testament."⁴ Consider also the writings of Tacitus. They are known to contain at least one numerical error that Tacitean and classical scholars have acknowledged as a copyist's mistake.⁵ Scholars recognize that, at some point in history, a copyist accidentally changed a number (from CXXV to XXV). Although such copyists' errors are known to exist, historians around the world cite such ancient works as Herodotus, Josephus, Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius, etc., and consider them trustworthy, educational, and worthy of study.

If scholars defend the integrity of ancient authors partly by acknowledging that many of the mistakes contained within their writings are the result of copyists' errors, it is only reasonable for these same scholars (whether atheists, agnostics, skeptics, or Christians) to recognize that alleged problems within the biblical text **may** be the result of scribal errors rather than mistakes on the part of one or more of the original Bible writers. Just as those who copied secular historical documents sometimes made mistakes (e.g., misspelling names, omitting words, etc.), scribes who copied the Bible from earlier texts also had the opportunity to err. As Gleason Archer observed: "Even the earliest and best manuscripts that we possess are not totally free of transmissional errors. Numbers are occasionally miscopied, the spelling of proper names is occasionally garbled, and there are examples of the same types of scribal error that appear in other ancient documents as well."⁶

Norman Geisler and William Nix have mentioned several ways that a scribe might accidentally change the biblical text, including: (1) omissions or repetitions of letters, words, or lines; (2) reversals (transpositions) of letters or words; (3) divisions of words in the wrong places (since words in the early manuscripts were not divided by spaces); (4) errors of hearing (such as when scribes copied the Scriptures by listening to someone read them); (5) trusting in memory instead of relying on exactly what the text says; (6) errors of judgment (possibly caused by insufficient lighting or poor eyesight); (7) poor penmanship; etc.⁷ Some time ago, I wrote a note asking an assistant to send a package to a Mrs. Ward. Unfortunately, the package got mislabeled “Mrs. Word,” either because my handwriting was too poor to distinguish adequately between an “a” and an “o,” or the assistant simply misread the name. This example shows how easily copyists’ mistakes can occur, even in modern times.

How many conscientious Bible students have memorized passages of Scripture and quoted them for months or even years without realizing that at some point in time they mistakenly changed, added, or omitted a word from the text. One of the occasional mistakes copyists made was to trust too much in their own memory. Instead of carefully noting every letter in every word on every line, some copyists might memorize too much at a time without looking back at the text. Keep in mind that scribes did not have computers in which they could punch keys that made the same letters every time, or that allowed them to copy and paste a paragraph of text with the push of a few buttons. Copying the Bible in ancient times was a painstaking, tedious job that

required constant attention and care even in the best of circumstances.

CAINAN, SON OF ARPHAXAD: A CASE STUDY IN COPYISTS' ERRORS

Luke 3:36 is the only verse in the Bible where one can read of the patriarch Arphaxad having a son named Cainan. Although another Cainan (the son of Enosh) is mentioned seven times in Scripture (Genesis 5:9-10,12-14; 1 Chronicles 1:2; Luke 3:37), outside of Luke 3:36, Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, is never mentioned. He is omitted in the genealogies of Genesis 10 and 11, as well as in the genealogy of 1 Chronicles 1:1-28. When the son of Arphaxad is listed in these genealogies, the name always given is Salah (or Shelah), not Cainan.

One important thing we learn from the various genealogies in Scripture is that sometimes they contain minor gaps—gaps that are both intentional and legitimate (see Matthew 1:1). Thus, just because Luke 3 contains a name that is not recorded in Genesis 10 or 11, or in 1 Chronicles 1, does not have to mean that someone made a mistake. The fact is, terms such as “begot,” “the son of,” and “father”—often found in genealogies—occasionally have a much wider connotation in the Bible than might be implied when such words are used in modern-day English (cf. Genesis 32:9; John 8:39). Simply because one genealogy has more (or fewer) names than another genealogy, does not mean that the two genealogies are in disagreement.

Still, the insertion of the name Cainan in Luke 3:36 most likely has a far different explanation—one that may

be more plausible, yet at the same time is more complicated to explain, and thus less popular. It is very likely that the “Cainan problem” is the result of a scribal error made when copying Luke’s gospel account.

Realizing that the New Testament originally was written in Greek without punctuation or spaces between words, the insertion of the name Cainan easily could have crept into Luke’s genealogy. Notice what the original text (in agreement with Genesis 10:24, 11:12, and 1 Chronicles 1:18,24) might have said:

*touserouchtouragautoufalektouebertousala
 touarfaxadtouseemtounooetoulamech
 toumathousalatouhenoochtouiarettoumaleleel**toukainan**
 touenoostouseethtouadamtoutheou*

If a scribe happened to glance at the end of the third line at **toukainan**, he easily could have written it on the first line as well as the third. Hence, instead of reading only one Cainan, what we read today is two Cainans:

*touserouchtouragautoufalektouebertousalat**toukainan**
 touarfaxadtouseemtounooetoulamech
 toumathousalatouhenoochtouiarettoumaleleel**toukainan**
 touenoostouseethtouadamtoutheou*

As you can see, it would not be difficult for a weary scribe to copy “Cainan” inadvertently from Luke 3:37 as he was copying 3:36.⁸

Although some apologists reject the idea that the insertion of Cainan in Luke 3:36 is a copyist’s error, the following facts seem to add much credence to this proposed explanation.

1. As stated earlier, this part of Luke's genealogy also is recorded in Genesis 10:24, 11:12, and in 1 Chronicles 1:18,24. **All** of these Old Testament passages, however, **omit** the Cainan of Luke 3:36. In fact, Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, is not found in **any** Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament.
2. Cainan is omitted from all of the following ancient versions of the Old Testament: the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac, the Targum (Aramaic translations of the Old Testament), and the Vulgate (a Latin translation of the Bible completed between A.D. 382 and 405).⁹
3. Cainan's name is absent from Flavius Josephus' patriarchal listing in his historical work, *Antiquities of the Jews*.¹⁰
4. The third-century Christian historian, Julius Africanus, also omitted Cainan's name from his chronology of the patriarchs, and yet he had copies of both Luke and Matthew.¹¹
5. The earliest known copy of Luke (a papyrus codex of the Bodmer Collection dated between A.D. 175 and 225) does not contain this Cainan.¹²

Some are quick to point out that the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) mentions the name Cainan and thus verifies that he was the son of Arphaxad, just as Luke 3:36 indicates.

The weakness in this line of argumentation is that the **oldest** Septuagint manuscripts **do not** include this reference to Cainan.¹³ Patrick Fairbairn indicated in his Bible encyclopedia that this Cainan does “not appear to have been in the copies of the Septuagint used by Theophilus of Antioch in the second century, by Africanus in the third, or by Eusebius in the fourth.”¹⁴ He further stated that this Cainan also was left out of the Vatican copy of the Septuagint.¹⁵ That “Cainan” was a later addition to the Septuagint (and not a part of it originally) also is evident from the fact that neither Josephus nor Africanus mentioned him, and yet all indications are that they both used the Septuagint in their writings. They repeat too many of the same numbers of the Septuagint not to have used it. Thus, Larry Pierce stated: “It appears that at the time of Josephus, the extra generation of Cainan was not in the LXX [Septuagint–EL] text or the document that Josephus used, otherwise Josephus would have included it!”¹⁶ As Henry Morris concluded in his commentary on Genesis: “[I]t is altogether possible that later copiers of the Septuagint (who were not as meticulous as those who copied the Hebrew text) inserted Cainan into their manuscripts on the basis of certain copies of Luke’s Gospel to which they then had access.”¹⁷ Although it is possible that “Cainan” in Luke 3:36 merely supplements the Old Testament genealogies, when all of the evidence is gathered, a better explanation is that the name Cainan in Luke 3:36 is the result of a copyist’s error.

MORE EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE COPYISTS' ERRORS

Jehoiachin's Age When He Began to Reign

In 2 Kings 24:8, we read that Jehoiachin succeeded his father as the 19th king of Judah at the age of **eighteen**. However, 2 Chronicles 36:9 informs us that he was “**eight** years old when he became king.” Fortunately, there is enough additional information in the biblical text to prove the correct age of Jehoiachin when he began his reign over Judah.

There is little doubt that Jehoiachin began his reign at eighteen, not eight years of age. This conclusion is established by Ezekiel 19:5-9, where Jehoiachin is described as going up and down among the lions, catching the prey, devouring men, and knowing the widows of the men he devoured and the cities he wasted. As Keil and Delitzsch observed when commenting on this passage: “The knowing of widows cannot apply to a boy of eight, but might well be said of a young man of eighteen.”¹⁸ Furthermore, it is doubtful that an eight-year-old child would be described as one having done “evil in the sight of the Lord” (2 Kings 24:9).

The simple answer to this “problem” is that a copyist, not an inspired writer, made a mistake. A scribe simply omitted a ten [the Hebrew numeral letter י [*yod*], which made Jehoiachin eight (Hebrew ח) [*heth*] instead of eighteen (Hebrew יח)]. This does not mean the inspired penmen erred. Rather, it indicates that minor scribal errors have slipped into some copies of the Bible. [If you have ever seen the Hebrew alphabet, you doubtless recognize that the Hebrew letters (which also were used for

numbers) might occasionally be confused quite easily.]

The Spelling of Hadadezer

Should the king's name be spelled with a "d" (2 Samuel 8:3; 1 Kings 11:23) or an "r" (2 Samuel 10:16; 1 Chronicles 18:3; KJV and ASV)? It would appear that the difference in spelling came about through the mistake of a scribe. Most likely Hadadezer (with a "d") is the true form since, "Hadad was the chief idol, or sun-god, of the Syrians."¹⁹ As William Arndt stated, "D and R may be distinct enough in appearance in English, but in Hebrew they are vexingly similar to each other."²⁰ The Hebrew *daleth* = ד, while *resh* = ר. There should be little doubt in our minds that Hadarezer simply is a corrupted form of Hadadezer. One can see how a copyist could easily have made this mistake.

When Did Absalom Commit Treason?

When David's son Absalom finally returned after killing his half-brother Amnon, 2 Samuel 15:7 indicates that "after **forty years**" passed, Absalom left home again and committed treason. Anyone who knows much Israelite history quickly realizes that Absalom most certainly did not spend 40 years at home during this time, for David's entire reign was only 40 years (2 Samuel 5:4). The number given in 2 Samuel 15:7 likely should be **four years**, which is more in keeping with the lifetime of Absalom, who was born in Hebron after David's reign as king began (2 Samuel 3:3). The number "four" also agrees with such ancient versions as the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Vulgate. There is little question that the number "forty" represents a copyist's error.

CONSCIENTIOUS COPYISTS

Although scribes are mentioned in the Bible as far back as 1000 B.C. (e.g., 2 Samuel 8:17), history records three general periods of Jewish scribal tradition: (1) the period of Sopherim (from Ezra until c. A.D. 200); (2) the Talmudic period (A.D. 100-c. 500); and (3) the period of the Massorettes (c. 500-c. 950).²¹ Jewish copyists were aware of the importance of their work and took it very seriously. They were not flawless in their transcription work, but the evidence shows that they were very conscientious. Infinitely more important than students copying spelling words, cooks copying recipes, or secretaries copying a boss's memo, scribes understood that they were copying the Word of God. Even the important work of medical transcriptionists cannot compare with the copyists of old. McGarvey noted how copyists in the Talmudic period "adopted for themselves very minute regulations to preserve the purity of the sacred text."²² Later, the Massorettes took even more stringent steps to ensure top-quality manuscripts. With a deep reverence for the Scriptures, they went above and beyond the "call of duty," laboring under ultra-strict rules in order to make the most accurate copies possible. In his *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Professor R.K. Harrison addressed the approach of the Massorettes to the Scriptures and their professionalism, saying:

They concerned themselves with the transmission of the consonantal text as they had received it [Hebrew has no vowels—EL], as well as with its pronunciation, on the basis that the text itself was inviolable and every consonant sacred.

The detailed statistical work that the Massorettes

undertook on each book included the counting of verses, words, and letters, establishing the middle of the book (a procedure which was useful in the case of bifid, or two-part, compositions) noting peculiarities of style, and other similar matters.²³

By taking such precautions in the copying of letters, words, and verses (by sections and books), it could be known if a word or letter had been omitted or added. Indeed, as Eddie Hendrix affirmed: “Such minute checks contributed to a high degree of copying accuracy.”²⁴ No other group of ancient copyists is more renowned than those of the Old Testament.

Although much less is known about New Testament copyists, according to Philip Comfort, who wrote *The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament*, paleographic evidence has revealed that “several of the early manuscripts were copied carefully with precision and acumen...,” no doubt “by educated and professional scribes.”²⁵ New Testament copyists also had grave motivation to copy the Scriptures with care. Although not typically quoted with copyists in mind, consider the words of Revelation 22:18-19:

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

In the second century A.D., Irenaeus applied this condemnation to copyists who knowingly contributed to

the initiation and perpetuation of textual errors.²⁶ Undoubtedly, due to the grace of God and the conscientiousness of copyists, “[t]he New Testament...has not only survived in more manuscripts than any other book from antiquity, but it has survived in purer form than any other great book.”²⁷

NO AUTOGRAPHS? NO PROBLEM.

Some may wonder how Christians can be confident that we have God’s Word today, when the original manuscripts (called autographs) are no longer available for our viewing. How can one know the Truth, if the Truth comes from copies of copies of copies...of the autographs, many of which contain various minute transcriptional errors? Should we simply give up and declare that attempts at finding the Truth are futile?

It is highly unreasonable to think that truths can be learned only from autographs. Learning and forming beliefs based on reliable **copies** of various written documents, objects, etc. is a way of life. To conclude that a driver in a particular state could not learn to drive adequately without having in hand the **original** driving manual produced by the state years earlier is absurd. To assert that no one could measure the length of one yard without having the standard yard in hand from the National Institute of Standards and Technology is ridiculous. Even if the standard yard was lost, the millions of copies of the yard in existence today would be sufficient in finding (or measuring) exactly what a yard is. Consider also the example McGarvey used of an autograph, which eventually was destroyed.

A gentleman left a large estate entailed to his descendants of the third generation, and it was not to be divided until a majority of them should be of age. During the interval many copies of the will were circulated among parties interested, many of these being copies of copies. In the meantime the office of record in which the original was filed was burned with all its contents. When the time for division drew near, a prying attorney gave out among the heirs the report that no two existing copies were alike. This alarmed them all and set them busily at work to ascertain the truth of the report. On comparing copy with copy they found the report true, but on close inspection it was discovered that the differences consisted in errors in spelling or grammatical construction; some mistakes in figures corrected by the written numbers; and some other differences not easily accounted for; but that in none of the copies did these mistakes affect the rights of the heirs. In the essential matters for which the will was written the representations of all the copies were precisely the same. The result was that they divided the estate with perfect satisfaction to all, and they were more certain that they had executed the will of their grandfather than if the original copy had been alone preserved; for it might have been tampered with in the interest of a single heir; but the copies, defective though they were, could not have been.²⁸

Everyday, all around the world, individuals, groups, businesses, schools, etc. operate with the conviction that autographs are unnecessary to learn the truths within them. Copies of wills, articles, and books can be gathered, inspected, and scrutinized until new copies

are published that virtually are identical to the original. “[A]ccurate communication is possible despite technical mistakes in copying.”²⁹ So it is with the Bible. Even though copyists were imperfect in their transcription work, more than enough copies of the Scriptures have survived so that, as Sir Frederic Kenyon remarked, “it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world!”³⁰

EVIDENCE OF RELIABLE BIBLE TRANSMISSION

The Old Testament

The Dead Sea Scrolls make up one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of all times. In 1947, a number of ancient documents were found by accident in a cave on the northwest side of the Dead Sea. This collection of documents, which has become known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, was comprised of old leather and papyrus scrolls and fragments that had been rolled up in earthen jars for centuries. From 1949 to 1956, hundreds of Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts and a few Greek fragments were found in surrounding caves, and are believed by scholars to have been written between 200 B.C. and the first half of the first century A.D. Some of the manuscripts were of Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings (e.g., 1 Enoch, Tobit, and Jubilees); others are often grouped together as “ascetic” writings (miscellaneous books of rules, poetry, commentary, etc.). The most notable and pertinent group of documents

found in the caves of Qumran near the Dead Sea is the collection of Old Testament books. Every book from the Hebrew Bible was accounted for among the scrolls except the book of Esther, as well as the Nehemiah section of Ezra-Nehemiah (which is a single book in the Hebrew Old Testament).

The Dead Sea Scrolls serve as strong evidence for the integrity of the Old Testament text. Prior to 1947, the earliest known Old Testament manuscripts went back only to about A.D. 1000. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Bible scholars have been able to compare the present day text with the text from more than 2,000 years ago. Textual critics have found that these ancient copies of Old Testament books are amazingly similar to the Massoretic text. Indeed, they serve as proof that the Old Testament text has been transmitted faithfully through the centuries. As Rene Paché concluded: “Since it can be demonstrated that the text of the Old Testament was accurately transmitted for the last 2,000 years, one may reasonably suppose that it had been so transmitted from the beginning.”³¹ What’s more, if copies of the Old Testament in the first century were sufficiently accurate enough for Jesus and the apostles to quote them and teach from them, and we possess Old Testament manuscripts that date back to (or before) the time of Christ, then Christians should feel extremely confident about the condition of the Old Testament in the 21st-century—at least as confident as was Jesus (cf. Matthew 22:31).

The New Testament

How confident can Christians be that the text of the New Testament is essentially the same today as it was

in the first century? Could it be that one of the central tenets of Christianity (e.g., Jesus' deity) is the result of a person's manipulation of the New Testament text centuries ago, as is alleged in Dan Brown's best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code*?³² Did someone come along in the Middle Ages and drastically change the text of the New Testament? Just what evidence do we have for the reliability of the New Testament?

Twenty-first-century Christians can be confident that the New Testament has been transmitted faithfully through the centuries in large part because of the vast amount of manuscript evidence in existence today, some of which goes back to the early second century A.D. When F.F. Bruce published the sixth edition of his classic book *The New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable?* in 1981, he noted how “there are in existence over 5,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament in whole or in part.”³³ Nearly 25 years later, Michael Welte of the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Munster, Germany, indicated that the number of Greek manuscripts stood at 5,748.³⁴ This number represents a far greater body of manuscripts than is known to exist for any other ancient volume.³⁵ For example, *The Histories* of Herodotus, Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, and the *Annals* of Tacitus, three well-known and oft-quoted ancient historical works, are backed by a combined total of 38 manuscripts.³⁶ The most documented book of antiquity next to the New Testament is Homer's *Iliad*. Some 643 manuscripts of the *Iliad* are in existence today,³⁷ which is still 5,000 less than the number of extant copies of the New Testament.

Equally impressive as the **number** of manuscripts of the New Testament in existence is the **age** of the

manuscripts. Whereas the extant copies of Plato, Thucydides, Herodotus, Tacitus, and many others are separated from the time these men wrote by 1,000 years, manuscript evidence for the New Testament reaches as far back as the early second century, and possibly earlier. In *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts*, a 700-page volume edited by Philip Comfort and David Barrett, more than 60 of the earliest Greek New Testament manuscripts are transcribed.³⁸ Many photographs of these early manuscripts (the originals of which are housed in museums throughout the world) also are contained in the book. In the introduction, Comfort and Barrett state: “All of the manuscripts [contained in the book—EL] are dated from the early second century to the beginning of the fourth (A.D. 100-300).”³⁹ In fact, “[s]everal of the most significant papyri date from the middle of the second century” and thus “provide the earliest direct witness to the New Testament autographs.”⁴⁰ They even suggest that “it is possible that some of the manuscripts thought to be of the early second century are actually manuscripts of the late first.”⁴¹ Thus, we can have great confidence in the transmission of the New Testament, not only because of the great number of extant copies, but because of how close these manuscripts date to the time when the autographs were written.

But, that’s not all. To the manuscript evidence, one also can add the ancient versions of the New Testament (e.g., Old Syriac, Old Latin, the Coptic, etc.), as well as the “more than 36,000 patristic citations containing almost every verse of the New Testament.”⁴² Non-inspired Christian writings from the first few centuries

(by men such as Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and many others) are saturated with quotations from the New Testament apostles and prophets. “Indeed, so extensive are these citations,” wrote the eminent New Testament scholar Bruce Metzger, “that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone in reconstructing practically the entire New Testament.”⁴³ These witnesses, along with the ancient versions, speak voluminously on behalf of the integrity of the Bible’s transmission.

Is there ample evidence from surviving manuscripts, versions, and early quotations of the New Testament documents that indicates the New Testament is essentially the same today as it was in the first century? Most certainly. The former director of the British Museum, Sir Frederic Kenyon, summed up the matter: “The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.”⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

Considering the potential over the past 1,900 years for the text of the Bible to be grossly corrupted, and the fact that such did not occur, Christians can be confident that God, though not inspiring the copyists in their transmission of His Word, no doubt used them in His providential preservation of it. Isaiah assured his listeners 2,700 years ago of the permanence of God’s Word, saying, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but

the word of our God stands forever” (40:8). Then, after more than seven centuries of transmission, the apostle Peter echoed Isaiah’s sentiments, describing the Word of God as “incorruptible,” and that which “lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:23-25).

Chapter 8



ALLEGED GENEALOGICAL CONTRADICTIONS

HOW OLD WAS TERAH WHEN ABRAHAM WAS BORN?

Genesis 11:26,32; 12:4; Acts 7:4

Unfortunately, in an attempt to defend the strict chronology of Bible genealogies, there are some who read them without taking into account that certain Hebrew phrases possess a wider connotation than what might be perceived in English. One of these phrases is found several times in Genesis 11. In this chapter, we learn of various Messianic ancestors who **lived a certain age** and **begot sons**. For example, verse 16 of that chapter reads: “Eber lived thirty-four years, and begot Peleg.” Later, we read where “Nahor lived twenty-nine years,

and begot Terah” (11:24). The sons listed in this chapter are generally thought to be the firstborn sons, yet the evidence shows that this was not always the case because there was **not** always a father-to-**firstborn**-son linkage.

Many have assumed that because Genesis 11:26 states, “Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran,” that Abram (also known as Abraham; cf. Genesis 17:5) was Terah’s firstborn, and that he was born when Terah was 70. The truth is, however, **Abraham was not born for another 60 years**. When Stephen was delivering his masterful sermon recorded in Acts 7, he stated that Abraham moved to the land of Palestine “after the death of his father [Terah]” (7:4, NIV). Yet if Terah was 205 years old when he died (Genesis 11:32), and Abraham departed Haran when he was 75 (Genesis 12:4), then Terah was 130, not 70, when Abraham was born. In light of this information, John Whitcomb and Henry Morris have aided us in better understanding Genesis 11:26 by paraphrasing it as follows: “And Terah lived seventy years and begat the first of his three sons, the most important of whom (not because of age but because of the Messianic line) was Abram.”¹

Lest you think this is an isolated incident (where the son mentioned was not the firstborn son), consider another example. Genesis 5:32 states: “And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth.” Like the situation with Terah begetting Abraham, Nahor, and Haran, here we read that at age 500, Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Was Shem the firstborn? Were the three sons of Noah triplets? Or was Shem mentioned first because of his Messianic connection? In all likelihood, the evidence seems

to indicate that Shem was not the firstborn, but was born two (or three) years later. Consider the following passages:

“Noah was six hundred years old when the flood waters were on the earth” (Genesis 7:6).

“And it came to pass in the **six hundred and first year**, in the first month, the first day of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry” (Genesis 8:13).

“Shem was **one hundred years** old, and begot Arphaxad **two years after the flood**” (Genesis 11:10).

These verses seem to suggest that Shem was not born when Noah was 500, but rather when Noah was 502 (or 503 if we are to understand the phrase “two years after the flood” to mean when they finally got off the ark and not when the flood waters ceased coming upon the Earth). A comparison of Genesis 11:10 with 10:22 may suggest that Shem’s son, Arphaxad, was not the firstborn son in his family. Likely, Shem, Arphaxad, and others are mentioned first for the same reason Abraham is—because they are Messianic ancestors, and not because they were the firstborn sons of their fathers. Interestingly, numerous other Messianic ancestors, such as Seth, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and Perez, were not firstborn sons. Was Moses being dishonest when he recorded these genealogies? Absolutely not. We must remember that

the year of begetting a first son, known in the Old Testament as “the beginning of strength,” was an important year in the life of the Israelite (Gen. 49:3;

Deut. 21:17; Psa. 78:51; and Psa. 105:36). It is this year...and not the year of the birth of the Messianic link, that is given in each case in Genesis 11.²

Just as Genesis 5:32 does not teach that Noah was 500 when Shem was born, Genesis 11:26 does not teach that Abraham was born when Terah was 70. This verse basically means that Terah **began having children** at age 70, not that all three children were born at that age. That Abraham, Nahor, and Haran were not triplets seems evident from other facts mentioned throughout Genesis. Considering Nahor's wife was Haran's daughter (11:29), and Nahor's granddaughter (Rebekah—22:23; 24:15) married Abraham's son (Isaac—24:67), it is even more clear what Genesis 11:26 means and what it does not mean. Abraham is mentioned first in 11:26 because of his greater importance. It was through his seed that all nations of the Earth would be blessed (12:3; 22:18). Those who allege that Acts 7:4 contradicts statements found in Genesis 11 and 12 simply are misunderstanding the text by not taking into account that certain Hebrew phrases possess a wider meaning than what might be perceived in modern-day English.

COULD TERAH HAVE BEEN 130 WHEN ABRAHAM WAS BORN?

Genesis 17:17; Acts 7:4

The “problem” with Terah being 130 when Abraham was born has to do with **why** Abraham regarded **his own** ability to beget a son at age 100 as somewhat incredible (Genesis 17:1,17). Curious and diligent Bible students want to know why the apostle Paul described Abraham's body as being “already dead (since he was

about a hundred years old)” (Romans 4:19; cf. Hebrews 11:12), if **Abraham** was born when his **father** was **130**? Why would Abraham have staggered at the thought of a 100-year-old-man begetting a son—if the aforementioned calculations are correct? [“Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old?’” (Genesis 17:17).]

First, it should be remembered that Abraham apparently did not think it impossible to sire a child by Hagar at age 85 (Genesis 16). In fact, by insisting that Abraham engage in conjugal relations with her maid, Sarah exhibited confidence in his ability to raise up an heir. In modern times, one only rarely hears of a man in his mid-seventies begetting children. Abraham, on the other hand, begot his first son at **86** years of age. Although during Abraham’s day the longevity of man was not what it once was (e.g., Noah begot sons at 500 years of age—5:32), it still was greater than it is today. Thus, we must refrain from comparing the ages of those who sired children thousands of years ago by today’s standards.

Another detail often overlooked in Abraham’s life is that he had more children than just Ishmael and Isaac. He actually obtained six heirs through a woman he married by the name of Keturah (Genesis 25:1-6; cf. 1 Chronicles 1:32). Because nothing is mentioned about Keturah until after the death of Sarah, it is reasonable to presume that the children she bore to Abraham came along well after Isaac was born. Genesis 23:1-2 states that “Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years” and “died.” After reading about Isaac’s marriage to Rebekah recorded in Genesis 24, the text says, “Abraham **again** took a

wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah” (25:1-2). If these events are to be understood as occurring in chronological order, it means Abraham was more than 140 when Keturah bore him six sons. [Abraham was ten years older than Sarah (17:17), and thus when Sarah died at 127, Abraham would have been 137. Also, since Isaac was born when Abraham was 100, and he (Isaac) married Rebekah at the age of 40 (25:20), then this would make Abraham at least 140 when he married Keturah.]

It must be admitted, however, that just because the events regarding Abraham’s marriage to Keturah are recorded after the death of Sarah, it does not necessarily mean this is the exact order. There are events recorded, and stories told, throughout the Bible that are not written in a chronological format (cf. Genesis 10 and 11; and Matthew 4:1-11 with Luke 4:1-13). As Keil and Delitzsch mentioned, “it is not stated anywhere, that Abraham did not take Keturah as his wife till after Sarah’s death. It is merely an inference drawn from the fact, that it is not mentioned till afterwards; and it is taken for granted that the history is written in strictly chronological order.”³ Adam Clarke agreed by stating: “**When** Abraham took Keturah we are not informed; it might have been in the lifetime of Sarah.”⁴ According to some, “this must have occurred many years before the death of Sarah, for several sons are listed.”⁵ However, based on the wording of Genesis 25:1, and the fact that neither Keturah nor any of her sons are ever mentioned before this time, it seems more likely that Abraham took Keturah as his wife **after** Sarah died. But, even if it were during his marriage to Sarah, he still would have been close

to (if not more than) a century old. Why? Because we read that well after entering the land of Canaan at the age of 75 Abraham was “childless” with “no offspring” (Genesis 15:2-3). Ishmael, Abraham’s first child, was not born until he was 86. The “best” scenario (for those who believe Keturah bore Abraham six sons while Sarah was still living) is that Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah were born sometime after Abraham was 86. Therefore, even the most conservative estimates put Abraham in his nineties during this time—a time when he was still begetting sons.

A final detail that few have considered in light of Abraham’s age when Isaac was born, is how old Abraham’s grandson, Jacob, was when Joseph was born. According to Genesis 47:9, Jacob was 130 years old when he arrived in Egypt (cf. 47:28), which was at the end of the second year of the famine (45:6,11). Joseph was in his thirtieth year when he stood before Pharaoh nine years earlier at the beginning of the seven years of plenty (41:46). Thus, at the end of the second year of the famine (the year Jacob arrived in Egypt, at the age of 130), Joseph would have been 39 years old. This means that Jacob was 91 when Joseph was born.

If Jacob was 91 when Joseph (“the son of his old age”—37:3) was born, one is curious to know how old he was at the birth of his youngest son, Benjamin. In order to ascertain this figure, one must begin with Jacob’s twenty-year commitment to Laban in Padan Aram (Genesis 31:38). The first seven years Jacob was in Padan Aram serving Laban, he was not married and had no children (29:18-20). After his “marriages” to Leah and Rachel, the text indicates that all of

Jacob's sons, save Benjamin, were born sometime within the next few years (Genesis 29:30-30:25). It was **after** Joseph's birth that Jacob began serving his final six years in Padan Aram (30:25; 31:38,41). We know that Benjamin was more than six years younger than Joseph, because he was not born until sometime after Jacob discontinued working for Laban. Jacob did not receive his twelfth son until after he: (1) departed Padan Aram (31:18); (2) crossed over the river (Euphrates—31:21); (3) met with his brother, Esau, near Penuel (32:22,31; 33:2); (4) built a house in Succoth (33:17); (5) pitched his tent in Shechem (33:18); and (6) built an altar to God at Bethel (35:1-19). Obviously, a considerable amount of time passed between Jacob's separation from Laban in Padan Aram and the birth of Benjamin near Bethlehem. Biblical commentator Albert Barnes conservatively estimated that Benjamin was 13 years younger than Joseph.⁶ Hebrew scholar John T. Willis said Benjamin was likely about 14 years younger than Joseph.⁷ Actually, if Benjamin were just ten years younger than Joseph (and few, if any, commentators have ever suggested there were less than 10 years between the two), that would mean Jacob was 101 when he beget Benjamin. The fact that Jacob could still beget children when he was 100 years old (with no indication of there being a miracle involved) supports the proposition that Terah, his great-grandfather (who begot Abraham 260 years earlier) could have begotten Abraham at 130 years of age.

The obvious question, then, is why it took a special miracle for Abraham to become a father when he was only 100 years old? Actually, there are several factors

that may come into play as to why Abraham was somewhat baffled at the idea of having a child at the age of 100. First, it seems likely that the emphasis of Genesis 17:17 is on the **physical condition** of Abraham at this particular period in his life, and not so much his actual age. It is possible that Abraham simply was failing in health. This would not be surprising, considering his son Isaac experienced a serious failing in health about **44 years** before he (Isaac) died (Genesis 27:1). [Consider that Since Isaac was 60 years older than Jacob (25:26), and since Jacob was about 91 when Joseph was born (as noted earlier), Isaac must have been about 151 when Joseph was born. Since Joseph was born after Jacob had been living in Padan Aram for about 14 years, Isaac would have been no more than 137 in Genesis 27:1.] Like Isaac, it may be that Abraham was failing in health at 100, even though he wouldn't die for another 75 years. Considering that his father begot him at 130, and that his grandson sired a child at 100, Abraham's statement about him being 100 years of age when Isaac was promised, likely should be interpreted in light of his physical condition at the time, rather than his actual age.

Even today, men use their age when describing their physical situation. For example, when most 45-year-old men are asked if they could play major league baseball at their current age, they often respond by saying, "I'm too old to play baseball." But does this mean that it can't be done? Obviously not, since Nolan Ryan was still throwing 100-mph fastballs when he was 45. Tom Brady was still winning Super Bowls at 43. Michael Jordan was still playing professional basketball at the age of 39. Thus, even though we know it still is possible

for certain people who are our same age (or older) to do something, we frequently use our age to describe our physical condition. My father begot me when he was 40. However, if someone asked me when I was 40 if I wanted any more children, I would likely have responded by saying, “I’m too old to be changing diapers.”

It seems clear that the miracle the Almighty worked on Abraham “depended on something else than his mere age.”⁸ The miracle was not that He simply made it possible for a 100-year-old man to beget a child (for this was done by others both before and after Abraham begot Isaac), but rather that He miraculously endowed him with new vital and reproductive energy for begetting the son of the promise. As Whitcomb and Morris concluded, “In response to his renewed faith in God and in God’s promise (Rom. 4:19), his [Abraham’s—EL] body, which was ‘now as good as dead,’ must have been renewed by God to live out the remaining 75 years and to beget many more children (Gen. 25:1-7).”⁹

Another reason Abraham was so perplexed at the promise of a son (Genesis 17:17) had to do with his wife’s physical condition. Genesis 18:11 states: “[I]t had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women” (18:11, ASV). Sarah’s “periods had ceased with the so-called change of life and with them the capacity to conceive.... Capacity for procreation and conception was extinct.”¹⁰ “From the human standpoint, it was impossible for a woman long after the onset of menopause to give birth to a child.”¹¹ For this reason, J.W. McGarvey, one of the brightest biblical scholars of the nineteenth century, concluded: “The incredulity of Abraham...had reference chiefly to Sarah.”¹² Abraham

knew it would take a miracle for her to conceive a child (cf. Hebrews 11:11).

A third reason Abraham expressed astonishment upon hearing Jehovah's promise of a son through Sarah could have depended largely on the possibility "that he had now been living thirteen years with a young concubine, Hagar, since the birth of Ishmael, and she had not borne him another son (17:24,25)."¹³ Although most people would disregard this option because Hagar "became despised" in Sarah's eyes after she conceived Ishmael (16:4), nothing is said about Sarah's feelings toward Hagar for the thirteen years after Hagar gave birth to Ishmael and before Isaac was born. It is more than possible that Abraham continued to "go in to her" during that time. If this was the situation, then certainly Abraham's amazement upon hearing the Lord's promise of a son (Genesis 17:17) could have been due (at least in part) to his inability to beget any more children with Hagar the past thirteen years.

The truth of the matter is that Terah was 130 when Abraham was born. This fact is known because of the inspiration by which Stephen spoke and Luke wrote (Acts 7:4). As renowned New Testament commentator R.C.H. Lenski said, it is a "simple matter of adding a few figures."¹⁴ It in no way contradicts the statement Moses recorded in Genesis 11:26 (that "Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran") or Abraham's statement in Genesis 17:17. That Abraham thought it incredible for him to have a son at 100 years of age must be understood in light of other information given in Genesis.

- Abraham had been able to "raise up an heir" at the age of 85 (Genesis 16).

- He then had six other sons by Keturah sometime after he was 86 (likely it was “long after” this time).¹⁵
- Also, Abraham’s grandson, Jacob, was 91 when Joseph was born, and approximately 100 when he begot his youngest son, Benjamin.

All of this information leads us to believe that Abraham’s amazement at the pronouncement of Isaac at age 100 was due to some other factor than just his being 100 years of age.

- Perhaps the emphasis is more on his **physical condition**, and not so much his actual age (with his age being used to “describe” his failing health).
- Or maybe, as J.W. McGarvey suggested, Abraham expressed amazement because “he had now been living thirteen years with a young concubine, Hagar, since the birth of Ishmael, and she had not borne him another son (17:24,25).”¹⁶
- Likely, however, most of Abraham’s bewilderment was due largely to his wife’s inability to conceive since her onset of menopause (18:11).

RUTH, DAVID, AND A MOABITE MANDATE

Ruth 4:13-22; Deuteronomy 23:3

Ruth 4:17 marks the first time in the English Bible that David, son of Jesse and future King of Israel, is mentioned. The events in the book of Ruth took place several decades prior to David’s birth (Ruth 1:1), but the great-grandson of Ruth is mentioned twice at the end of the book (4:17,22) in order to highlight the lineage of the Messiah—from Judah’s son, Perez (Ruth 4:18; Genesis 38:29; cf. 49:10), to Obed (husband of Ruth),

to David (to whom God promised an heir, Who would establish an eternal kingdom—2 Samuel 7:12-13; Psalm 89:3-4; Luke 1:31-33).

Many skeptics question how David could be a descendant of Ruth, a Moabite, and yet also become the divinely chosen King of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1-13). After all, Moses wrote: “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever” (Deuteronomy 23:3). So how could King David, the great-grandson of a Moabite woman, be allowed into the assembly of God?

First, one must consider the meaning of the phrase “shall not enter **the assembly of the Lord.**” Did Moses mean that Ammonites or Moabites (1) could not live within the borders of Israel? (2) could not become part of the Israelite community in general? (3) could not gather together and become part of an actual assembly of the Israelites (cf. Deuteronomy 5:22; 9:10; 10:4; 18:16)? (4) could not become one of the elders or officials who often assembled together (cf. Deuteronomy 31:28,30)? and/or (5) could not become part of the religious community (cf. Leviticus 21:17-21)—that is, were they forbidden “from participation in religious rites in the homes and at the tabernacle and later at the temple”?¹⁷ While Moses and the original recipients of this command doubtlessly understood the precise meaning of Deuteronomy 23:3, those living 3,500 years this side of the giving of the Law of Moses (and who have never been accountable to that law), may never know for sure exactly what the Lord meant. And, if neither the Christian nor the skeptic can know

for sure what the precise meaning of the “assembly of the Lord” is in Deuteronomy 23:3, then obviously no **proven** contradiction exists.

Second, different kinds of “outsiders” lived in and around the Israelites. With two-and-one-half tribes of Israel inhabiting the east side of the Jordan (Numbers 32), **where the Moabites and Ammonites lived** and where the Israelites were currently camping (Deuteronomy 1:5; 29:1) when Moses gave the Moabite/Ammonite restriction of Deuteronomy 23:3, he was referring to the non-converted, uncircumcised “alien” or “foreign” Moabite/Ammonite who was never to be allowed into the general Israelite community. Ruth may have been a Moabite **ethnically**, but **religiously** she was a dedicated follower of Jehovah (Ruth 1:16-18), who participated in and abided by Mosaic law (Ruth 3:1-18; 4:1-12; Deuteronomy 25:5-10).¹⁸ Thus, she and her faithful descendants (including David) were rightly accepted in Israel.

Another reason Deuteronomy 23:3 would not have applied to Ruth and her offspring is simply because a non-Israelite **mother** in Israel (especially one who was a proselyte!) did **not** determine the nationality of her offspring. Joseph’s Egyptian wife did not make their sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, Egyptians (Genesis 41:50-52). Moses’ marriage to Zipporah, a Midianite (Exodus 2:21-25), did not disqualify their sons Gershom and Eliezer from being Israelites (Exodus 2:22; 18:1-4), nor did it make them Midianites. Salmon’s marriage to Rahab (the Jerichoan harlot) did not mean their son Boaz was a recognized Gentile of Jericho (Matthew 1:5). And the Moabitess Ruth, wife of Boaz, did not make their son Obed, their grandson Jesse, their

great-grandson David, or their descendants Joseph and Mary (the earthly parents of Jesus) anything other than legitimate descendants of Abraham (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38)—according to the standard reckoning of Israelite heritage. In the eyes of all of Israel, David was an Israelite of the tribe of Judah—and was no more a Moabite than he was a Jerichoan.¹⁹

Although Boaz, Ruth, and David were imperfect people (Romans 3:23), who broke various Old Testament commandments (cf. Samuel 11-12), neither these three nor God (in appointing David as king over Israel) ignored or broke the law of Deuteronomy 23:3.

WAS SHIMEI A DESCENDANT OF JOSEPH OR BENJAMIN?

2 Samuel 19:16-17; 19:20

When King David returned to Jerusalem following his son Absalom's death, Shimei, who previously had cursed David (2 Samuel 16:5-14), made haste to meet with the king. Second Samuel 19:16 indicates that Shimei was a Benjamite. In fact, when he went to beg for mercy from David, Shimei took "a thousand men of Benjamin with him" (19:17). Some have wondered why, when Shimei met with David, he said, "I am the first to come today of all **the house of Joseph** to go down to meet my lord the king" (19:20). If Shimei was a descendant of Benjamin, why does the text indicate that he was of the "house of Joseph"? Is this a contradiction?

First, simply because two contradictory statements may exist in Scripture does not mean the **Bible writers** were errant. Bible students must consider **who** is speaking

when two different statements are compared: is it an inspired Bible writer, or someone the writer is quoting? When Jesus healed a demoniac, some of the Pharisees accused Him of casting out demons, not by the power of God, but by the power of “Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons” (Matthew 12:24). The gospel writer Matthew did not make this allegation; he merely reported it. The inspired writers of the Bible are in no way responsible for the false statements they quote from others (e.g., Satan). Regarding the statements under question in 2 Samuel 19, even if the statements were contradictory (which they are not), it must be acknowledged that though the **inspired writer** mentioned that Shimei was in fact a Benjamite (2 Samuel 19:16), in 2 Samuel 19:20 **Shimei** is the one speaking. Thus, even if Shimei said something incorrect (or lied) about being of the house of Joseph, it should not reflect negatively upon the inerrancy of Scripture.

Second, the skeptic cannot prove that (because Shimei said that “**of all the house of Joseph**” he was the first to come to David) he was alleging that he literally was a descendant of Joseph rather than Benjamin. Shimei could simply have been (and surely was) using “Joseph” (one of the most recognized names in Israelite history—a patriarch whom God used to save their nation) to refer to Israel as a whole. The psalmist called the Israelites “the sons of Jacob **and Joseph**” (77:15). Notice also how the psalmist used the terms “Israel” and “Joseph,” as well as various tribal names seemingly interchangeably in Psalm 80: “Give ear, O Shepherd of **Israel**, You who lead **Joseph** like a flock.... Before **Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh**, stir up Your strength, and come and save us!” (80:1-2).

The fact is, the Bible writers frequently used a part to stand for the whole or the whole for the part (a figure of speech known as synecdoche). Thus, referring to Israel as “the house of Joseph” is not at all problematic.

WHO WAS ABIJAH'S GRANDFATHER?

1 Kings 15:1-2; 2 Chronicles 13:1-2

Less than two decades following the split of the United Kingdom of Israel, Abijah (also called Abijam) began his reign as the second king of Judah—the Southern Kingdom. Following the death of his father, Rehoboam, Abijah reigned for about three years, and typically is remembered more for his God-given victory over Jeroboam and the Northern Kingdom than anything else (see 2 Chronicles 13). Some believe, however, that Abijah's name is better served as a reminder of one of the most obvious contradictions in the Bible.²⁰

According to 1 Kings 15:1-2, “In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah. He reigned three years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Maacah **the daughter of Abishalom**” (NASB). Second Chronicles 13:1-2 indicates something different about Abijah's mother, Maacah (also called Micaiah). The chronicler recorded: “In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah became king over Judah. He reigned three years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Micaiah **the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah**” (13:1-2, NASB). Although initially some might be disturbed by the three variant names listed in these verses (Abijam for Abijah, Maacah for Micaiah, and Abishalom for Absalom), skeptics generally focus their criticism upon the genealogy of Abijah. Was his

mother the daughter of Absalom, son of David, or was she the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah?

If the term “daughter” was used only in one sense in the Bible—to mean strictly the direct, physical, female offspring of a parent—then Christians might have a legitimate problem on their hands. In this specific sense, Abijah’s mother, Micaiah, could not be both the “daughter” of Absalom and the “daughter” of Uriel. The truth is, however, like the word “son,” the term “daughter” is used in the Bible in a variety of ways. [NOTE: Aside from using the term “son” to signify son by actual birth, Bible writers used it to mean (1) son-in-law (1 Samuel 24:16; cf. 18:27); (2) grandson (Genesis 29:5; cf. 24:24,29); (3) descendant (Matthew 1:1); (4) son by creation, as in the case of Adam (Luke 3:38); (5) son by education (i.e., disciple—1 Samuel 3:6); etc.] The *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* lists several different ways that the term “daughter” is used in Scripture (in addition to the ordinary usage of the word), including: (1) daughter-in-law (Ruth 2:2); (2) female descendant (Luke 1:5; 13:16); (3) the women of a particular place taken collectively (Luke 23:28); (4) women in general (Proverbs 31:29); etc.²¹ Since the term “daughter(s)” is used in such a wide variety of ways in Scripture, a genuine contradiction cannot be shown to exist (in this case or in any other) unless it is proven that the same sense of the word is being used. Skeptics have no evidence that the term “daughter” can only be used in the strictest sense in 1 Kings 15:2, therefore the “contradiction” really is just an “allegation.”

There simply is no way of knowing how many times in the Bible the terms “son(s)” and “daughter(s)” are used

to mean grandchildren, great-grandchildren, or some other descendant. After reading Genesis 29:5, one might think that Laban was the son of Nahor, but Genesis 24 explains that he actually was Nahor's grandson (24:24,29; cf. 22:20-24). Consider also Mephibosheth. He is called the "son of Saul" in 2 Samuel 19:24, when actually he was "the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul" (2 Samuel 9:6; 4:4). He literally was Saul's grandson, though Scripture refers to him once simply as "son of Saul." These are only two examples where the Bible conveys to the reader that the term "son" was used to mean grandson. One can only wonder how many times the terms "son" and "daughter" are used this way throughout Scripture, and yet unlike the two aforementioned examples, were **not** fully explained as such.

Regarding Micaiah, most likely she was the **granddaughter** of Absalom and the **daughter** of Uriel. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus supports this understanding, saying that Micaiah "was a daughter of Absalom **by Tamar.**"²² Tamar was **not** Absalom's wife, but his daughter (2 Samuel 14:27), who was named for Absalom's beloved sister (2 Samuel 13:1). This would mean that Micaiah is actually the daughter of Tamar and Uriel, and the granddaughter of Absalom.

Unbelievers of all sorts are doing whatever they can to find "errors" within the Bible. The particular alleged contradiction regarding the identity of Abijah's grandfather (whether it is Absalom or Uriel) is merely one example where skeptics have pronounced guilt without sufficient evidence for such a verdict. It seems they could not care less about how the Scriptures (and history) use and define biblical words, phrases, idioms, etc. If

many skeptics exerted even a small amount of effort to understand the Bible, they would see their “contradictions” for what they really are—unsubstantiated accusations. As an example of the lack of effort exerted by some skeptics to understand the Bible, notice the following comment by Steve Wells, author of *The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible*. He asked: “Who was Abijah’s maternal **grandmother**? Uriel or Abishalom?”²³ At least four times on Wells’ website the question regarding Abijah’s maternal **grandmother** is asked. The problem is, **neither** Uriel **nor** Abishalom were his grandmother. These were his **male** ancestors, not female.

If non-Americans interpreted American English words and phrases like skeptics interpret the Bible, can you imagine how frustrated Americans would get with them? Would a foreigner unaware of how many different ways the term “coke” is used in America be justified in calling a southerner a liar for saying that Dr. Pepper is a coke? People in the southeastern United States frequently refer to all sodas as cokes. When someone in Georgia says he wants a coke, it may mean that he wants a specific kind of coke—perhaps a Dr. Pepper. Consider also the non-American who hears three different people at a basketball game say, “That’s my girl.” If, based upon the fact that only one of the three people who made this comment could have been the girl’s father, the foreigner concluded that one or more of those who used this phrase must have lied, would her accusation be foolproof? No. The reason: the phrase “That’s my girl,” has more than one meaning in American culture. A mother or father may use the phrase to mean, “That is my **daughter**.” But, the expression might also be used

by a young man to mean, “That’s my **girlfriend**,” or by a girl to mean, “That’s my **good friend**.” Until one can know for sure exactly how the phrase is used in a particular setting, a person is unjustified in his or her accusation of dishonesty.

If skeptics would only give the Bible writers some of the same fair consideration that they want people today to give them in their discussions and writings, many fewer “contradictions” would be alleged.

WAS SHEALTIEL OR PEDAIAH THE FATHER OF ZERUBBABEL?

1 Chronicles 3:19; Ezra 3:2; Nehemiah 12:1;
Haggai 1:1; Matthew 1:12; Luke 3:27

If a teenage boy whom you just met told you that his parents were “David and Marie,” but then a few minutes later you overheard him tell a county clerk that he was the son of “John and Joanne,” you might assume that the teen had lied either to you or to the county clerk. The fact of the matter is, however, the teen could be telling the truth. It may be that most people recognize his parents by their middle names—David and Marie, but for more official business his parents use their first names—John and Joanne. Or, perhaps the boy had been reared by his grandparents because his parents had died in a tragic car accident when he was an infant. The boy may refer to his grandparents as “mom” and “dad” since they were the only “mom” and “dad” he ever really knew (experientially). In turn, the grandparents may refer to him as their “son.” In most all unofficial documents and casual conversations the terms “mom,” “dad,” and “son”

are used. For nearly all official documents and in most formal conversations, the terms “grandparents” and “grandson” are used. These are two very real possibilities as to why a teenage boy may refer to his parents by different names. Assuming and alleging the worst about the teen without knowing all of the facts would be unfair and inappropriate.

The fact is, family ties are often complicated (and especially confusing to outsiders who are unaware of others’ family history). I met two teenage girls a few years ago who informed me that their mother was also their grandmother. I was puzzled initially. Then they told me that their mother had abandoned the family several years earlier and that their dad eventually married their birth mother’s mother. In time, the girls began calling their grandmother “mom.”

Just like in our day and time, there are many names and family ties in Scripture that can be a little confusing—even in the genealogy of Jesus. Abraham married Sarah, his half-sister (Genesis 20:12; cf. 17:15-16; 22:17). Their son, Isaac, married Rebekah, his second cousin (Genesis 22:20-23; 24:4,15). Jacob, Abraham’s grandson, married his first cousins, Rachel and Leah, who were sisters (Genesis 24:29; 29:15-30). Years later, Jacob’s son, Judah, committed sexual immorality with his own daughter-in-law (thinking she was a prostitute), and she subsequently gave birth to two sons—Perez and Zerah. In one sense, these boys were his sons; in another sense, they were his grandsons (Genesis 38:12-30).

Zerubbabel is another historical figure in the genealogy of Christ around whom there is some confusion. While

the books of Ezra (3:2,8; 5:2), Nehemiah (12:1), Haggai (1:1,12,14; 2:2,23), Matthew (1:12), and Luke (3:27) all indicate that Zerubbabel was the “son of Shealtiel,” the chronicler noted the following about his immediate ancestry: “[T]he sons of Jeconiah, the prisoner, were **Shealtiel his son**, and Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah. And the **sons of Pedaiah were Zerubbabel** and Shimei” (1 Chronicles 3:17-19a, NASB). The obvious question is: “Why does 1 Chronicles indicate that Pedaiah was Zerubbabel’s father, if everywhere else in Scripture his father is said to be Shealtiel?”

Skeptics are quick to list 1 Chronicles 3:19 as a contradiction. The truth is, however, there are reasonable, potential solutions to this conundrum. First, it may be that Zerubbabel was sired by one brother and reared by another. Recall that Mordecai was a father figure to Queen Esther (he “had brought up” the future queen of Persia; Esther 2:7), though he was actually her cousin. Jesus, “being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph,” was, in reality, “of God,” not of man (Luke 3:23). Joseph helped to rear Jesus, and was perceived to be His biological father (Matthew 13:55), but in no way was he Jesus’ father in the normal sense. The fact is, sometimes a “son” is reared by a “dad,” who is not his father in the strictest sense of the word.

Another legitimate, possible explanation to the differences in the aforementioned verses involves a Law of Moses with which many are unfamiliar—the levirate marriage law. According to Deuteronomy 25:5-6,

If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall

not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And **it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother**, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel (cf. Matthew 22:24-26).

If Shealtiel had been married, yet died prior to siring a son, his brother Pedaiah may have taken Shealtiel's wife to be his wife. If such was the case, their firstborn son (Zerubbabel) would be called after Shealtiel, not Pedaiah (even though, in the strict biological sense, Zerubbabel would be Pedaiah's son).

Admittedly, the Bible does not explain why 1 Chronicles 3:19 differs from the other passages in Scripture that refer to Zerubbabel as Shealtiel's son. What can be established, however, is that logical possibilities exist for the differences. In truth, **without more information**, it would be just as unfair to accuse the chronicler of lying about Zerubbabel's father as it would be to disparage a teenager we meet in the community who refers to his grandfather as his "dad." Surely we can see the rationality of restraint and the foolishness of jumping to unproven conclusions.

DID MATTHEW MISCALCULATE IN HIS GENEALOGY OF CHRIST?

Matthew 1:17

If a person were to count the names of those in Matthew's genealogy of Christ, he would find that Matthew lists 41 male ancestors between (and including) Abraham to Jesus. Yet, at the conclusion of the genealogy,

Matthew wrote: “So all the generations from Abraham to David are **fourteen** generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are **fourteen** generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are **fourteen** generations.” Fourteen times three is 42, not 41. So why does Matthew only include 41 names?

Before answering the question, one important observation to note about the various genealogies in Scripture is that sometimes they contain gaps—gaps that are intentional and legitimate. (The only reason we know of these gaps in certain genealogies is because the Bible fills them in elsewhere.) Terms such as “begot,” “the son of,” and “father”—which often are found in genealogies—occasionally have a much wider connotation in the Bible than might be implied when such words are used in modern-day English. Unlike in the English language where ancestors several generations removed can be pinpointed with exact specificity quickly and easily (e.g., “Mr. Shiver was my great-great-great grandfather”), no comparable terminology was used in biblical Hebrew. Jacob once called Abraham “father,” even though Abraham was actually his grandfather (Genesis 32:9). About 2,000 years later, the Pharisees also referred to Abraham as their “father” (John 8:39). The term “father” in these passages obviously means “ancestor.” Ezra’s genealogy in Ezra 7:1-5 omits six generations of his ancestors, calling Azariah “the son of Meraioth,” when strictly speaking Azariah was the great-great-great-great-great grandson of Meraioth (cf. 1 Chronicles 6:1-15).

In the first verse of Matthew’s gospel account, which introduces his genealogy of Jesus, the apostle wrote of

Jesus as being “the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” Obviously, Matthew knew that Jesus was not an immediate son of either David or Abraham; he simply used these words in the same flexible way that the ancients frequently used them (and with which the Jews were very familiar). Later in his genealogy, Matthew intentionally omitted some other names as well (e.g., Joash, Amaziah, and Azariah; cf. Matthew 1:6-16; 1 Chronicles 3:11-12). We cannot be certain why Matthew excluded these names (though likely it was for memorization purposes). We can, however, be certain that if these gaps represented a legitimate discrepancy, the Jews would have brought it to the attention of Christians 2,000 years ago when they sought to discredit Jesus’ royal lineage.²⁴

Still, the question remains: why 41 male ancestors from Abraham to Jesus, rather than the 42 that Matthew 1:17 seems to suggest? The fact is, Matthew does not tell us exactly why he only included 41 names, but again, it would appear that he grouped the names of Jesus’ male ancestors in a manner that would aid in retention of the information. Though commentators have varying ideas of Matthew’s three-fold breakdown of Christ’s genealogy, it seems logical simply to take Matthew at his word. That is, it appears the writer counted the great King David twice (again, for amplification and memorization purposes). The conclusion of the genealogy is broken down thusly: from “Abraham to David,” from “**David** until the captivity in Babylon,” and “from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ” (1:17). Since David is the only name in the genealogy of Christ that is listed twice in Matthew 1:17, then it would seem logical to conclude that Matthew intentionally counted David twice, thus

getting the number 42. [As the most celebrated king in the history of Israel, the Jews would have appreciated David's name marking an end and a beginning to divisions in Jesus' genealogy. What's more, "the numerical value of 'David' in Hebrew is fourteen.... By this symbolism Matthew points out that the promised 'son of David' (1:1), the Messiah, has come."²⁵]

Since Matthew does not mention an exact name at the end of the second and the beginning of the third grouping in Matthew 1:17, but rather a time period ("the captivity in Babylon"), it may be that Josiah marked the end of the second grouping ("about the time of the captivity, as sufficiently near for the purpose of convenient computation"²⁶), while Jeconiah began the third division, with Jesus at the end.

Throughout Matthew's gospel account, Jesus is portrayed as King of a heavenly kingdom (Matthew 16:28; 21:5; 28:18; cf. John 18:36). Matthew refers to the kingdom (*basileia*) of God over 50 times. The apostle began his account of the good news of Jesus with the Messiah's genealogy, "to show that Jesus Messiah is truly in the kingly line of David, heir to the messianic promises, the one who brings divine blessings to all nations."²⁷ It may very well be that Matthew's emphasis on David [who brought an end to the line of "patriarchs" in Jesus' ancestry (1:2-6; cf. Acts 2:29), and marked the beginning of a long line of kings (1:7-11), which eventually brilliantly culminated in the reign of Christ over heaven and Earth] explains his seemingly counting David twice in Matthew 1:17.

WHO WAS JOSEPH'S FATHER IN JESUS' GENEALOGY?

Matthew 1:16; Luke 3:23

In his book *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy*, skeptic Dennis McKinsey confidently asserts that the “contradictory” genealogies found in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 open up “a Pandora’s box that apologists would just as soon remained closed forever.”²⁸ One “contradiction” he cited revolves around the father of Joseph.²⁹ Whereas Matthew 1:16 states that “**Jacob begot Joseph** the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ,” Luke 3:23 says, “Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of **Joseph, the son of Heli.**” How is it that Joseph could be the son of both Jacob and Heli? Is this a contradiction that Christian apologists prefer to keep under lock and key as McKinsey suggests? Not at all.

Admittedly, **on the surface**, the two statements may appear contradictory. However, there actually is a very simple explanation for the differences in the two verses: Matthew gives the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, while Luke presents the genealogy of Jesus through His mother, Mary. Thus, Jacob is Joseph’s father (in Matthew 1:16), while Heli is Mary’s (in Luke 3:23).

But how can this be? Luke does not say that Mary is the offspring of Heli; rather, “Joseph” is “the son of Heli.” What logical, biblically sound explanation leads to the rational conclusion that Luke 3 is the genealogy of Jesus through His mother, Mary? Consider the following seven points.

First, the two genealogies are totally different from the time of David to Jesus. It's not merely that two different "grandfathers" of Jesus are listed—all the names given for the preceding **1,000 years** before Christ are **different** (except in the case of Zerubbabel and Shealtiel, where there likely was intermarriage among the two families, or else they were different people who wore the same names). Joseph descended from David's son, Solomon (Matthew 1:6-7), while Mary descended from David's son, Nathan (Luke 3:31).

Second, Matthew and Luke were writing to different audiences: Matthew to the Jews and Luke to the Greeks. From the beginning of Matthew's gospel account, he focused on Jesus' connection to Abraham and David, from whom the Old Testament repeatedly prophesied that the Messiah would come. Luke, on the other hand, writing to a broader audience, took the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Adam (the father of **all** mankind) and to God (the Creator of **all** mankind).

Third, though writing to a wider audience, Luke follows the Jewish tradition of only mentioning males in a line of descent. David Roper noted: "Women might be mentioned incidentally (Mt. 1:3,5), but the lines of descent were through men.... [A]s a rule, Jews did not include women in genealogies."³⁰ What's more, according to Adam Clarke, "whenever a family happened to end with a daughter, instead of naming her in the genealogy, they inserted her husband, as the son of him who was, in reality, but his father-in-law."³¹ Thus, Luke gives a **fleshly** genealogy of the **virgin-born** Jesus (Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-7) through His mother, Mary, though designated by her husband's name.

Fourth, as we discussed earlier in this chapter,³² the terms “son” and “daughter” (Ruth 2:2; Luke 1:5) are used in Scripture in a variety of ways. “Son” may mean son by actual birth, grandson (Genesis 29:5; cf. 24:24,29), descendant (Matthew 1:1), stepson (e.g., Jesus was not Joseph’s biological son), as well as son-in-law³³ (1 Samuel 18:27; cf. 24:16), etc. Thus, **in different senses**, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were all “of Heli.”

Fifth, **Matthew** tells of the coming and arrival of Jesus from **Joseph’s** perspective, while **Luke** writes from **Mary’s** point of view. Give serious attention to the following narratives of Matthew and Luke and consider their overall frame of reference:

- From **Matthew** (1:18-2:1a):

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to **Joseph**, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then **Joseph** her **husband**, being a just **man**, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while **he** thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to **him** in a dream, saying, “**Joseph, son of David**, do not be afraid to take to **you** Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.” Then **Joseph**, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded **him** and took to

him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And **he** called His name Jesus.

- From Luke (1:26-49,56; 2:7,17b-19):

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a **virgin** betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. **The virgin's name was Mary.** And having come in, the angel said **to her**, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with **you**; blessed are **you** among women!" But when **she** saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said **to her**, "Do not be afraid, **Mary**, for you have found favor with God. And behold, **you will conceive** in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then **Mary said** to the angel, "How can this be, since **I** do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said **to her**, "The Holy Spirit will come upon **you**, and the power of the Highest will overshadow **you**; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth **your** relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then **Mary said**, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from **her**.

Now **Mary** arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it

happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of **Mary**, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “**Blessed are you among women**, and blessed is the fruit of **your womb!** But why is this granted to me, that **the mother of my Lord** should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is **she** who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told **her** from the Lord.”

And **Mary said**: “**My soul** magnifies the Lord, and **my spirit** has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His **maidservant**; for behold, henceforth all generations will call **me** blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for **me**, and holy is His name....” And **Mary** remained with her about three months, and returned to her house....

And **she** [Mary] brought forth **her** firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths....

[T]hey [the shepherds] made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But **Mary** kept all these things and pondered them in **her** heart.

Given the Gospel writers’ **stark differences** in perspectives of the accounts of the coming and arrival of Jesus—with Matthew’s clear focus on Joseph and Luke’s heavy attention on Mary—it was **perfectly natural** for Matthew to give the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph and Luke through Mary.

Sixth, the Greek article *tou* (“the”) is **absent** before Joseph’s name in Luke’s genealogy of Christ, yet, as

Frederic Godet correctly highlighted, the word occurs before **every one** of the other names in the genealogy (e.g., the Heli, the Matthat...the Adam, the God).³⁴ Godet also noted: “In the genealogy of Matthew, the article *ton*³⁵ is put in the same way before each proper name, which clearly proves that it was the ordinary form in vogue in this kind of document.”³⁶ Thus, “[t]his want of the article [in Luke’s genealogy—EL] puts the name Joseph outside the genealogical series properly so called, and assigns to it a **peculiar** position.”³⁷ Perhaps such peculiarity is a heavy hint of this genealogy being through Jesus’ maternal grandfather (Heli), and not Joseph.

Finally, “If Luke were presenting Joseph’s genealogy,” Lenski logically argues, “it would according to his own statement be the genealogy only of the *supposed* father of Jesus, and of what value would such a genealogy be? No man could find a reference to the legal relation of Joseph to Jesus in *hos enomizeto*”³⁸ (“as was supposed”).³⁹ Furthermore, Roper suggests, “The phrase ‘being, as supposed, the son of Joseph’ should probably be thought of as parenthetical, with the words **son of Eli** [or Heli—EL] referring to Jesus, not Joseph.”⁴⁰ Thus, as A.T. Robertson concluded, “Jesus would...be **Heli’s grandson**, an allowable meaning of ‘son.’”⁴¹ In fact, not only should

[t]he parenthesis in our versions...be extended to include the name Joseph: “(**as was supposed of Joseph**).” To shorten it as is done in our versions makes the entire list up to “of God” (v. 38) dependent on “as was supposed,” for there is no way to restrict this clause except by including “of Joseph” in it as a part of the parenthesis.⁴²

The New Testament Greek manuscripts lack parentheses in Luke 3:23, just as they lack parentheses and all other sorts of punctuation throughout (which English Bible translators have added in attempts at greater clarity). Though “as was supposed” is undoubtedly a parenthetical expression, it makes better sense if such includes Joseph [“(as was supposed of Joseph)”]. Had this **fuller** expression been made parenthetical long ago, fewer individuals might have had difficulties seeing Mary’s ancestry in Luke’s genealogy of Christ.

In conclusion, it is perfectly logical to argue that Luke did **not** trace Jesus’ **legal lineage** from Joseph back to David and Abraham (as did Matthew). Rather, he traced the **physical bloodline** of Jesus’ **virgin mother** back to David, Abraham, and Adam. Such a logically possible explanation exonerates Luke and Matthew of any error in their penning of Jesus’ genealogies.

Chapter 9



REASONING ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The resurrection of Christ is central to the faith of every Christian. Without a firm belief that “God has raised Him from the dead” (Romans 10:9), salvation from sin is impossible. Paul wrote: “[I]f Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). Without the good news of Jesus’ defeat of death, the Gospel is void of the power to save mankind (cf. Romans 1:16). If Christ had never been “raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,” there would be no “newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Rather, every accountable person would lie “dead in trespasses” (Ephesians 2:1,5) without hope of becoming “a new creation” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Truly, the resurrection of Christ provides the substance for the Christian’s hope and the solid foundation upon which to build his faith.

Is it any surprise then that first-century evangelists put so much emphasis on Jesus' resurrection? Peter specifically mentioned how the apostle chosen to take the place of Judas was to become a witness of Jesus' resurrection (Acts 1:22). A short while later, Peter preached a sermon to thousands of Jews in Jerusalem that hinged on the empty tomb of Christ (Acts 2:24,31-32). He then spoke in the Temple about the Lord's resurrection (Acts 3:15,26), and afterward witnessed to this fact before the highest court of the Jews (4:10; 5:29-32). The apostle similarly witnessed to the Gentiles, beginning with Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:30ff.). Paul repeatedly spoke of the resurrection of Christ in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:30,33,34,37), reasoned from the Scriptures about it in Thessalonica (Acts 17:3), and then gave testimony of this fact before Festus and Agrippa (Acts 26:22-25).

First-century Christians frequently discussed the resurrection of Christ and were prepared to defend it using logical arguments comprised of sufficient evidence (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Acts 1:3; 26:22-23). Christ's resurrection was fundamental to their faith and prominent in their preaching. It should be no less today.

Hundreds of millions of people on Earth disbelieve in Jesus' soul-saving, death-defying power. Some of the most criticized portions of Scripture are those that record testimony of the resurrection of Christ. Skeptics scoff at the idea of Jesus coming back to life. Infidels in classrooms and media outlets throughout the world adamantly argue against it, some even alleging that "the bodily resurrection of Jesus did **not** happen **on good biblical grounds.**"¹ Indeed, critics of Christ ridicule the gospel writers' resurrection narratives, contending that there

are blatant contradictions within the accounts.

In his book *Biblical Errancy*, skeptic Dennis McKinsey lists 20 alleged discrepancies under a section titled, “The Resurrection Accounts are Contradictory.”² In Dan Barker’s book, *Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist*, he lists no less than 17 “discrepancies” within the resurrection accounts alone.³ According to Barker, “The resurrection of Jesus is one of the few stories that is told repeatedly in the bible... When we compare the accounts, we see that they don’t agree... **The story of the resurrection of Jesus...is hopelessly irreconcilable.**”⁴

In other books, we have discussed various proofs for the resurrection of Christ.⁵ In this book (and in this particular chapter), we respond to several of the questions that skeptics such as McKinsey, Barker, and others frequently ask in an attempt to discredit the Bible’s portrayal of this monumental, Earth-shaking event (Matthew 28:2).

DID JESUS NOT REQUIRE EVIDENCE?

Mark 16:14; John 20:29

Since the Bible repeatedly testifies that the faith of Christians is grounded in truth, reason, knowledge, and evidence (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1-4; John 5:31-47; Acts 1:3; 26:25), some wonder why Jesus rebuked the apostles for doubting His resurrection prior to seeing Him alive. Recall what happened when Mary Magdalene, the first person to whom Jesus appeared, went to alert the mourning apostles of Jesus’ empty tomb and resurrection. When the apostles “heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, **they did not believe**” (Mark 16:11). Later, when the two disciples on the road to Emmaus reported to

the apostles how Jesus had appeared to them as well, the apostles “did not believe them either” (Mark 16:13). When Jesus finally appeared to the apostles (not including Thomas) on the evening of His resurrection (John 20:19), He questioned their “doubts” (Luke 24:38) and “**rebuked their unbelief** and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen” (Mark 16:14). Had Jesus expected His apostles to have faith in His resurrection without proof? And why did Jesus tell Thomas, “Blessed are those who have **not seen** and yet **have believed**” (John 20:29)? Was Jesus commending an unverifiable, fickle faith?

The fact is, neither Thomas nor any apostle was rebuked for wanting evidence of Jesus’ resurrection. They were rightly rebuked, however, (1) for doubting the credible evidence they had already received, and (2) for demanding more evidence than was necessary for them to have solid faith in the risen Savior.

Prophecies

The same Man Whom Peter confessed was “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16); the same Man Whom the apostles had seen raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43-44); the same Man Whom they saw transfigured (Matthew 17:5-9); the same Man Who had worked many amazing miracles in their presence (John 20:30); the same Man Who foretold precisely of Peter’s triple denial (Matthew 26:34,75); the same Man Who accurately prophesied His betrayal, scourging, and crucifixion (Matthew 20:18-19): **this same Man repeatedly prophesied of His resurrection, even foretelling the very day on which it would occur** (John 2:19; Matthew

12:40; 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 26:32). So well-known were Jesus' prophecies of His resurrection from the dead on the third day that **even His enemies** were aware of them. In fact, the "chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, 'Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, "After three days I will rise." Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal Him away'" (Matthew 27:62-64).

So why did Jesus rebuke His apostles for their unbelief following His resurrection? Was He implying that they should have behaved like simpletons and believed everything they ever heard from anyone? Not at all. (According to Proverbs 14:15, "The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps.") Jesus had every right to rebuke His apostles' unbelief, first and foremost, because **they refused to believe His word** (cf. Romans 10:17). They had seen Him raise the dead. They had witnessed His perfect life. They had heard His consistent words of Truth, including His repeated and accurate prophecies of various matters, even about His betrayal, arrest, scourging, and crucifixion. They had every **logical reason** to believe what Jesus had prophesied about His resurrection. **Everything** they had ever seen and heard from Jesus was pure, right, and true. However, rather than **expect** a risen Redeemer on Sunday morning, such an idea "appeared to them as **nonsense**" (Luke 24:11, NASB). Rather than traveling to Galilee and searching for the living Lord as soon as the Sun appeared on the third day (Matthew 26:32), they remained in Jerusalem behind closed doors "for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19).

Jesus wanted His disciples to understand about His death and resurrection. He told them: “Let these words **sink down into your ears**, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men” (Luke 9:44). He desired for them to have a sincere, strong, evidence-based faith. Sadly, fear, preconceived ideas about the Messiah and His kingdom, and spiritual blindness (Luke 9:45; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4) initially interfered with the apostles’ belief in His resurrection.

Credible Testimony

When Jesus told Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29), was He condoning a careless faith? Was He advancing the idea of an emotion-driven, feel-good religion? Should we expect Christians living 2,000 years this side of the resurrection of Christ to have a reasonable faith in the risen Savior? If, unlike Thomas and the rest of the apostles, Jesus has never appeared to us, how can we expect to have a fact-based faith?

The same God Who rightly expects His human creation to examine the evidence and come to a knowledge of Him without ever literally seeing Him, is the same God Who expects man to follow the facts that lead to a resurrected Redeemer without ever personally witnessing His resurrection. No one believes in God because they can put Him under a microscope and see Him. No one can prove He exists by touching Him. We cannot use the five senses to see and prove the actual essence of God (cf. John 4:24; Luke 24:39). What we have at our fingertips, however, is a mountain of **credible** evidence that **testifies** on God’s behalf. The very existence of finite matter

testifies to a supernatural, infinite, eternal Creator. The endless examples of design in the Universe bear witness to a grand Designer. The laws of science (e.g., the Law of Biogenesis) testify to God's existence.⁶

A reasonable faith in Jesus' resurrection is, likewise, based upon a mountain of **credible testimony**. Just as credible testimony (and not first-hand knowledge) has led billions of people to believe, justifiably so, that Alexander the Great, Napoleon, and George Washington were real people, millions of Christians have come to the **logical conclusion** that Jesus rose from the dead. Nineteen-hundred-year-old eyewitness accounts of Jesus' resurrection exist in the most historically documented and accurate ancient book in the world—the New Testament. The event was foreshadowed and prophesied in the Old Testament (Psalm 16:10; Jonah 1:17-2:10; Matthew 12:40). Though very serious preventative steps were taken to keep the lifeless body of Jesus buried (Matthew 27:62-66), the tomb was found empty on the exact day He promised to arise. The body of Christ was never found (and, no doubt, first-century skeptics, especially the impenitent Jews who put Him to death, would have loved nothing more than to present Jesus' dead body to early Christians). The once fearful and skeptical disciples quickly transformed into a courageous, confident group of Christians who suffered and eventually died for their continual belief and teachings regarding the resurrected Lord. Hundreds of early Christians were able to testify to having seen Jesus firsthand after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). Tens of thousands of once-skeptical Jews, not the least of which was Saul of Tarsus, examined the evidence, left Judaism, and

confessed Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Acts 2:41,47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 21:20). What's more, these same Jews changed their day of worship from Saturday to Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). As with evidence for the existence of God or the inspiration of the Bible, the cumulative case for the resurrection of Christ from credible testimony lies at the heart of a fortified faith.

Indeed, Jesus rightly rebuked His apostles following His resurrection. They should have believed Mary Magdalene because she was a credible witness who said nothing more than what the Son of God had previously said many times would happen: He would arise on the third day following His death. What's more, the blessing that Jesus mentioned to the apostle Thomas ("Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"—John 20:29) was not an endorsement of a blind, emotionally based, feel-good religion, but the Heaven-sent support for the truthful, credible evidence that leads the open-minded truth-seeker to confess Him as "Lord and God."

WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT *JESUS'* RESURRECTION?

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

After the widow's son of Zarephath died, Elijah prayed to God, "and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived" (1 Kings 17:22). A few years later, the prophet Elisha raised the dead son of a Shunammite (2 Kings 4:32-35). Then, after Elisha's death, a dead man, in the process of being buried in the tomb of Elisha, was restored to life after touching Elisha's bones (2 Kings

13:20-21). When Jesus was on Earth He raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5:21-24,35-43), as well as the widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11-16) and Lazarus, who had been buried for four days (John 11:1-45). After Jesus' death and resurrection, Matthew recorded how "the graves were opened; and **many** bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many" (27:52-53). Then later, during the early years of the church, Peter raised Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:36-43), while Paul raised the young man Eutychus, who had died after falling from a third-story window (Acts 20:7-12).

All of these people died, and later rose to live again. Although some of the individuals arose very shortly after death, Lazarus and (most likely) the saints who were raised after the resurrection of Jesus were entombed longer than was Jesus. In view of all of these resurrections, some have asked, "What is so important about **Jesus'** resurrection?" If others in the past have died to live again, what makes **His** resurrection so special? Dennis McKinsey once mockingly asked:

Why would it [Jesus' resurrection—EL] be of any consequence since...many others rose before Jesus? By the time he rose this was a rather common occurrence. I would think it would have been met by a resounding yawn rather than surprise followed by: So what else can you do? Adam's act of coming into the world as a full grown adult is more spectacular.⁷

Given the fact that Jesus is not the only person ever to come back to life, what is it that makes His resurrection

unique? Why is the resurrection of **Jesus** more significant than any other?

Miracles, Resurrections, and Explanations

First, similar to how the miracles of Jesus were worked in order to set Him apart as the Son of God and the promised Messiah, even though all others who worked miracles during Bible times were not God in the flesh, the resurrection of Jesus is more significant than any other resurrection simply because the inspired apostles and prophets said that it was. Many people throughout the Bible worked miracles in order to confirm their divine message (cf. Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4), but only Jesus did them as proof of His divine **nature**. Once, during the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, a group of Jews surrounded Jesus and asked, “If You are the Christ, tell us plainly” (John 10:24). Jesus responded to them saying, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me.... I and My Father are one” (John 10:25,30). These Jews understood that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God in the flesh (cf. 10:33,36), and Jesus wanted them to understand that this truth could be confirmed by the miracles that He worked.

The miracles testified to His deity (John 20:30-31). Why? **Because He said they did** (10:25,35-38; cf. 5:36). The miracles that Jesus performed bore witness to the fact that He was from the Father (John 5:36), **because He said He was from the Father**. A miracle in and of itself did not mean the person who worked it was deity. Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Peter, Paul, and a host of others worked miracles, with some even raising people from

the dead, but not for the purpose of proving they were God in the flesh. The apostles and prophets of the New Testament worked miracles to confirm their **message** that Jesus was the Son of God, not to prove that **they** were God (cf. Acts 14:8-18). Jesus, on the other hand, performed miracles to bear witness that **He** was the Son of God, just as He claimed to be (cf. John 9:35-38).

The first reason that Jesus' miraculous resurrection is more significant than the resurrections of Lazarus, Tabitha, Eutychus, or anyone else who was raised from the dead, is simply because the inspired apostles and prophets in the early Church said that it was more important. Like the miracles He worked during His earthly ministry that testified of His deity, His resurrection also bore witness of His divine nature. There is no record of anyone alleging that Lazarus was God's Son based upon his resurrection, nor did the early Church claim divinity for Eutychus or Tabitha because they died and came back to life. None of the aforementioned individuals who was resurrected ever claimed that their resurrection was proof of deity, nor did any inspired prophet or apostle. On the other hand, Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power... by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). His resurrection was different because of Who He was—the Son of God. Just as the miracles He worked during His earthly ministry testified of His divine message, and thus also of His divine nature, so did His resurrection.

Prophesied in the Old Testament

A second reason why Jesus' resurrection stands out above all others is because it alone was foretold in the

Old Testament. In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter affirmed that God had raised Jesus from the dead because it was not possible for the grave to hold Him. As proof, he quoted Psalm 16:8-11 in the following words:

I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence (Acts 2:25-28).

Peter then explained this quote from the book of Psalms by saying:

Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses (Acts 2:29-32).

The apostle Paul also believed that the psalmist bore witness to Christ, and spoke of His resurrection. In his address at Antioch of Pisidia, he said:

And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” And that

He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: "I will give you the sure mercies of David." Therefore He also says in another Psalm: "You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption." For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:32-39).

Where is the prophecy for the resurrection of Jairus' daughter? When did the prophets ever foretell of Eutychus's or Tabitha's resurrection? They are not there. No resurrected person other than Jesus had his or her resurrection foretold by an Old Testament prophet, nor did any inspired apostle or prophet in the first century apply Old Testament prophecies to them. This certainly makes Jesus' resurrection unique.

Jesus Prophesied of His Own Resurrection

The third significance of Jesus' resurrection is seen in the fact that His resurrection was preceded by numerous instances in which **He prophesied that He would defeat death**, even foretelling the exact day on which it would occur. Jesus told some scribes and Pharisees on one occasion, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, **so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**" (Matthew 12:40). Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recorded how Jesus "began to show to His disciples

that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and **be raised the third day**” (Matthew 16:21; cf. Mark 8:31-32; Luke 9:22). While Jesus and His disciples were in Galilee, Jesus reminded them, saying, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and **the third day He will be raised up**” (Matthew 17:22-23). Just before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus again reminded His disciples, saying, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. **And the third day He will rise again**” (Matthew 20:18-19). Jesus’ prophecies concerning His resurrection and the specific day on which it would occur were so widely known that, after Jesus’ death, His enemies requested that Pilate place a guard at the tomb, saying, “Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore command that the tomb be made secure **until the third day..**” (Matthew 27:63-64). They knew exactly what Jesus had said He would do, and they did everything in their power to stop it.

Where are the prophecies from the widow’s son of Zarephath? Had he prophesied of his resurrection prior to his death? Or what about the son of the Shunammite woman that Elisha raised from the dead? Where are his personal prophecies? Truly, no one mentioned in the Bible who rose from the dead prophesied about his or her resurrection beforehand other than Jesus. And certainly no one ever prophesied about the exact day on which he

or she would arise from the dead, save Jesus. This prior knowledge and prophecy makes His resurrection a significant event. He overcame death, just as He predicted. He did **exactly** what he said He was going to do, on the **exact** day He said He was going to do it.

Preceded by a Perfect Life

Fourth, the uniqueness of Jesus' resurrection is seen in the fact that He is the only resurrected person ever to have lived and died without having committed one sin during His lifetime. He was "pure" and "righteous" (1 John 3:3; 2:1), "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). He was "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19), "[W]ho knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). No one else who has risen from the dead ever lived a perfect life, and then died prior to his or her resurrection for the purpose of taking away the sins of the world (cf. John 1:29). Because Jesus lived a sinless life, died, and then overcame death in His resurrection, He alone has the honor of being called "the Lamb of God" and the "great High Priest" (Hebrews 4:14). "Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many," and because of His resurrection, "those who eagerly wait for Him," to them "He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

To Live Forevermore

Finally, and perhaps most important, the significance of Jesus' resurrection is seen in the fact that He was the first to rise from the dead **never to die again**. Since no one who has risen from the dead is still living on Earth, and since there is no evidence in the Bible that God ever

took someone who had risen from the dead into heaven without dying again, it is reasonable to conclude that all who have ever arisen from the dead, died in later years. Jesus, however, never died again. He rose from the grave to live forevermore. All others who previously were raised at one time, died again, and are among those who “sleep” and continue to wait for the bodily resurrection. Only Jesus has truly conquered death. Only His bodily resurrection was followed by eternal life, rather than another physical death.

It has been argued by skeptics that “it’s the Resurrection, per se, that matters, **not the fact that Jesus never died again.**”⁸ However, the inspired apostles said otherwise. Paul actually linked the two together while preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, saying, God “raised Him from the dead, **no more to return to corruption.... He whom God raised up saw no corruption**” (Acts 13:34,37). Paul also impressed upon the minds of the Christians in Rome how Jesus, “having been raised from the dead, **dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him**” (Romans 6:9). [Is it any wonder why Paul testified before Agrippa and Festus how Jesus was “the first to rise from the dead” (Acts 26:23)? “[H]e was the first who rose again from the dead to return no more into the empire of death.”⁹] Jesus said of Himself: “I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive **forevermore**” (Revelation 1:17-18). Furthermore, the writer of Hebrews argued for a better life through Jesus on the basis of His termination of death. One reason for the inadequacy of the old priesthood was because “they were prevented by death.” Jesus,

however, because He rose never to die again, “continues forever” in “an unchangeable priesthood,” and lives to make intercession for His people (Hebrews 7:23-25). As so often is the case, skeptics comment on the Bible without really knowing what the Bible says. To say that “it’s the Resurrection, per se, that matters, not the fact that Jesus never died again,”¹⁰ is to deny (or ignore) what the apostles and prophets actually stated.

Conclusion

Whether or not Eutychus, Tabitha, Lazarus, etc., rose from the grave, our relationship with God is not affected. Without Jesus’ resurrection, however, there would be no “Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). Without Jesus’ resurrection, no suitable High Priest would be able to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). Without Jesus’ resurrection, we would have no assurance of His coming and subsequent judgment (Acts 17:31).

Jesus’ resurrection **is** significant—more so than any other resurrection ever to have taken place. Only Jesus’ resurrection was verbalized by inspired men as proof of His deity. Only Jesus’ resurrection was prophesied in the Old Testament. Only Jesus prophesied of the precise day on which He would arise from the grave and fulfilled that prediction. Only Jesus’ resurrection was preceded by a perfect life—a life lived, given up, and restored in the resurrection for the purpose of becoming man’s Prince, Savior, and Mediator. And, only Jesus rose never to die again.

WHY IS CHRIST CALLED THE “FIRSTFRUITS”?

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul wrote at length concerning the resurrection of the dead, because some of the Christians in Corinth taught “that there is no resurrection of the dead” (vs. 12). As one of his proofs for the Christian’s eventual resurrection, Paul pointed to the fact of the resurrection of Christ, and showed that the two stand or fall together, saying, “if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile” (vss. 16-17)! After hypothetically arguing from the absurd in an attempt to get the Corinthian Christians to see that their stance on the final resurrection completely undermined Christianity, Paul proceeded to demonstrate that Christ **had** risen, and thus made the resurrection of the dead inevitable. It is in this section of Scripture that some find a difficulty. Beginning with verse 20, Paul wrote:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But **each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits**, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

In view of the fact that Jesus was not the first person ever to arise from the dead (as previously discussed), some have questioned why the apostle Paul twice described Jesus as “the firstfruits” from the dead in 1 Corinthians 15. Did Paul err? Was he ignorant of all of the previous

resurrections? In what sense did Paul speak of Christ as “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”?

One could respond reasonably to these questions by pointing out the aforementioned fact that Jesus was the first to rise from the dead—**never to die again**. In this sense, Christ is “the firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5; cf. Acts 26:23). Another (and perhaps better) explanation to the question surrounding 1 Corinthians 15:20,23 and Paul’s use of the word “firstfruits” (Greek *aparche*) is to recognize the metaphor Paul employed. Under the old law, the firstfruits were the earliest gathered grains, fruits, and vegetables that the people dedicated to God in recognition of His faithfulness for providing the necessities of life. The Israelites were to offer to God a sheaf of the first grain that was harvested on the day after the Sabbath following the Passover feast (Leviticus 23:9-14). Paul used the term “firstfruits” in this letter to the Corinthian church to reinforce the certainty of the resurrection. Just as the term “firstfruits” indicates that “the first sheaf of the forthcoming grain harvest will be followed by the rest of the sheaves. Christ, the firstfruits raised from the dead, is the guarantee for all those who belong to him that they also will share in his resurrection.”¹¹ Jesus is God’s “firstfruits” of the resurrection. And, like the Israelites, God will gather the rest of the harvest at the final resurrection. Paul seemingly wanted the Corinthians to understand (by way of metaphor) that Christ’s resurrection is a **pledge** of our resurrection. It is inevitable—a full harvest guaranteed by God Himself.

HOW MANY WOMEN, MEN, AND ANGELS WERE AT THE TOMB OF JESUS?

Matthew 28:1-5; Mark 16:1-5;
Luke 23:55-24:10; John 20:1-12

In his debate with Michael Horner on “Did Jesus Really Rise From the Dead?” atheist Dan Barker asked:

Who were the women who came to the tomb? Matthew said it was Mary Magdalen and the other Mary. Mark said it was Mary Magdalen, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. Luke said it was Mary Magdalen, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other women. John said Mary Magdalen....

Who was at the tomb when they arrived? Mark said there was one “young man.”... Luke said there was [sic] two men. Matthew said there was one angel, and John, the last writer, said, there’s two angels. See what’s happening here? See how the myth is growing and getting more exaggerated?¹²

Indeed, two of the most frequently cited reasons for questioning (and perhaps rejecting, as in the case of Barker) the four resurrection accounts have to do with the identity and number of women who went to the empty tomb of Jesus, as well as who (and how many) they actually found there.

The Women

Many fail to recognize in their critique of the Bible that additional information is not necessarily contradictory information. Was it essential for the apostle

John to mention every woman who came to the tomb of Jesus on the morning of His resurrection, or was he at liberty to mention as few as he wanted (John 20:1)? If Mary Magdalene was at the tomb on that Sunday morning, and John recorded that she was there, without ever denying the presence of others (some of whom were mentioned by Matthew, Mark, and Luke), could his record of the events be truthful? Of course. Differences exist among the Gospel writers' accounts, but no one has proven that they are discrepant. Just as a person might say, "I went to the ball game with Bill, Bob, and Bubba," he might also truthfully say, "I went to the game with Bill and Betty." These statements are not necessarily contradictory. One can easily (and honestly) supplement the other. A person may only mention Bill and Betty in one setting when talking to one group (e.g., at worship where the church knows the married couple), while at another setting when talking to a different group (e.g., at the office where only the men are known), he may truthfully just mention the men. We must keep in mind that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote at different times, to different peoples, for different reasons.

Consider the scenario where four different newspaper reporters are covering the 2021 NBA finals (between the Phoenix Suns and the Milwaukee Bucks). All four writers are from different cities, including Phoenix, Milwaukee, Charleston, South Carolina, and Athens, Greece. Here are the four different headlines from the Bucks' third win in the series:

- From Phoenix: "Timely Team Effort Lifts Bucks Over Suns"

- From Milwaukee: “Jrue Holiday’s Big Night on Offense and Defense Leads to W”
- From Charleston: “Hometown Hero Kris Middleton Shoots Lights Out in Win”
- From Athens: “Greece’s Giannis Leads the Way for Another Bucks Win”

All four reporters focused on different people in their headlines (and stories) for different reasons for their different audiences. Yet, all four reports were truthful. No reasonable person would accuse the writers of contradicting one another. Similarly, no rational, fair-minded individual should assume the Bible writers were errant in their accounts of the events on the morning of Jesus’ resurrection.

Furthermore, if the Bible writers always told every detail of every account the same way (mentioning the same people, places, things, and events exactly alike), the criticism would then be, “They all copied each other’s accounts. They conspired with one another!” When an experienced detective interviews various suspects regarding a crime, and all four suspects have **the exact same** alibi (down to the smallest details), the detective will be highly suspicious of such “perfect” repetitiveness—wondering if collusion has taken place to cover up a crime.

One of the many marvels of the Gospel accounts is how similar they are so as not to be contradictory, yet how different they are so as not to be guilty of collusion. This perfect balance of various truthful differences is what should be expected by independent truth-tellers, especially those who were inspired by God.

The Number and Nature of Those Already at the Tomb

The gospel writers also differ in their accounts of who was at the tomb of Jesus when the women arrived. Regarding the **number** of individuals present, if there were “two” (as Luke and John specify), then there was at least one (on whom Matthew and Mark focus). Matthew and Mark do not say “there was **only** one,” but they do mention one individual. As with the number of women who came to the tomb, the number of individuals who were already at the tomb is not contradictory but supplementary. If I tell someone, “I have **an** old car with a lot of miles on it,” and I tell someone else, “I own **two old cars** you should check out,” I have not contradicted myself. Both statements are factual. Simply because I did not mention both cars in the first conversation is not a denial of owning more than one older car. It’s quite telling how easily skeptics can understand the legitimacy of supplementation not being equivalent to a contradiction in everyday-life scenarios, yet not give the Bible writers the same fair treatment.

Still, what about the **nature** of the individuals at the tomb of Jesus? Were they men or angels? The answer is simply, “They were both.” Lest someone scoff at such an answer, pause for a moment to consider how versatile certain things are (as well as the description of those items). In one setting, a person may refer to his handheld device as a “phone,” and in another setting, his “flashlight.” He may take out this device at a meeting to check his “calendar,” while later on that night he uses it as an “alarm clock.” (Imagine telling someone in 1950 that his “phone” would one day also be his flashlight,

calendar, alarm clock, camera, directory, etc. He would have thought you had gone mad. Yet, to those in the 21st century, it all makes perfect sense.) Many things are not either/or; they are both/and.

Similar to how Jesus was both God **and** man (John 1:14,15; Philippians 2:5-11), the individuals at the tomb of Jesus on the day of His resurrection were both angels and men. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were all correct in their accounts. **The angels were in human form.** Mark and Luke referred to their humanity (in their appearance), while Matthew and John referred to their angelic nature. Consistent with what Scripture teaches elsewhere (e.g., Genesis 18:1-33; 19:1,5,15), in the past, both God and angels have come to Earth in the form of human beings.

The four gospel accounts independently testify that various women arrived at the tomb of Jesus on the morning of His resurrection and were greeted by angels who were in the form of men. Such differently worded statements are without contradiction. In truth, they stand as perfectly harmonious accounts with different, supplemental material from four different independent writers.

WAS THE TOMB OPEN WHEN THE WOMEN ARRIVED?

Matthew 28:2; Mark 16:4; Luke 24:2; John 20:1

According to Mark, Luke, and John, by the time Mary Magdalene and the other women reached the sepulcher of Jesus on the first day of the week after Christ's crucifixion, the great stone covering the entrance to His tomb already had been rolled away (16:4; 24:2; 20:1). Matthew,

on the other hand, mentions the rolling away of the stone **after** writing that the women “came to see the tomb.” In fact, at first glance it seems that Matthew 28:1-6 indicates several significant things took place in the presence of the women.

Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

How is this passage explained in light of the fact that the other gospel writers clearly affirmed that the great stone blocking the entrance to the tomb had rolled away **before** the women arrived?

The explanation to this conundrum is that the events recorded in Matthew 28:1-6 were not written chronologically. Matthew did not intend for his readers to conclude from this section of Scripture that the women actually saw the stone roll away from the door of Jesus’ sepulcher. On the contrary, verse 6 implies “Christ was already risen; and therefore the earthquake and its accompaniments must have taken place at an earlier point of time, to which the sacred writer returns back in his narration.”¹³ Verses 2-4 serve more as a footnote to the reader (explaining events that took place prior to the women’s arrival),

and are in no way an indication that Matthew believed the women arrived at the tomb while it still was closed.

The simple fact is, Bible writers did not always record information in a strictly chronological sequence. (See *The Anvil Rings* volume 2, chapter 5, titled “Alleged Chronological Contradictions,” for more information on this subject.) Similar to a teacher who is telling her class a story, and inserts information into it about something the main character did in the past or will do in the future, Bible writers occasionally “jump” ahead of themselves by inserting pertinent parenthetical material.

As a person studies the narrative technique of Matthew (and other Bible writers), he quickly realizes that the writer of the first gospel sometimes arranged his account in **topical** order rather than in a strictly **chronological** order. Matthew 28:1-6 is just one example. Another example can be found in Matthew 21:12-22. Whereas Matthew recorded the cleansing of the temple before Jesus cursed the fig tree (21:12-19), Mark placed the temple cleansing after Jesus cursed the tree (11:12-19). When comparing the two gospel accounts, one soon finds that Matthew’s narrative is more of a summary, while Mark’s account is more detailed and orderly. Christ actually made two trips to the Temple (Mark 11:11,15) and cursed the fig tree on His second trip. Mark reveals that Jesus did not cleanse the Temple on the day of his triumphal entry into the city, but on the day following. Matthew, on the other hand, takes the more topical approach and addresses the two trips of Christ to the Temple as though they were one event. The same is true of the events recorded in Matthew 28:1-6. What Mark, Luke, and John state more particularly, and have “divided,” Matthew mentions together.

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Matthew 28:8; Luke 24:9; Mark 16:8

Another one of the many questions that critics Dan Barker and Dennis McKinsey both ask is, “Did the women tell what happened?”¹⁴ Allegedly, Mark’s account of the women who came to the tomb on the morning of Jesus’ resurrection disagrees with what Matthew and Luke recorded.

Notice carefully what these three gospel writers penned concerning the women following their visit to the empty tomb.

“So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran **to bring His disciples word**” (Matthew 28:8).

“Then they returned from the tomb and **told all these things** to the eleven and to all the rest” (Luke 24:9).

“So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And **they said nothing to anyone**, for they were afraid” (Mark 16:8).

Since Matthew and Luke indicated that the women brought word of Jesus’ resurrection to the disciples, while Mark specified that the women “said nothing to anyone,” then supposedly the resurrection narratives prove unreliable. Is this true?

Before answering this question, consider briefly what the prophet Isaiah foretold about the silence of the coming Messiah. He wrote (as if it had already happened):

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, **yet He opened not His mouth**; He was led as a lamb to

the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers **is silent, so He opened not His mouth** (53:7).

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would not open His mouth, but would be “silent.” Question: Did Jesus ever speak during His ministry? Certainly, but this prophecy does not characterize Jesus’ entire ministry. Instead, it refers to the particular time when Jesus was tried and crucified. Still, however, Jesus was not completely silent even during His trial and crucifixion (cf. Matthew 26:64; 27:11; Luke 23:28-31,43). So how could Isaiah describe Him as being “silent”? Aside from the fact that “to open the mouth” frequently meant more than simply to speak or not to speak,¹⁵ Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled because **there was a particular period of time in which Jesus remained silent**. Mark recorded that Jesus, while being falsely accused, “kept silent and answered nothing” (Mark 14:61; cf. Matthew 26:63). **The silence of the Sufferer was momentary**, and any attempt to force Isaiah’s prophecy to mean more than temporary silence is unjustifiable.

Similarly, the women who visited Jesus’ tomb following His resurrection “said nothing” **for a period of time**. Dan Barker, Dennis McKinsey, and other critics who point to Mark 16:8 as contradicting Matthew 28:8 and Luke 24:9 fail to consider that these verses are incongruous only if the writers were referring to the exact same period of the day. The truth is, **initially**, the women were afraid **and silent**, as Mark recorded. Then, later that day, they broke their silence and “told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest” (Luke 24:9). Mark’s narrative does not contradict Matthew and Luke, but supplements their accounts. What’s more, if Bible critics

were to examine **all** of Mark's resurrection narrative, they would learn that following the women's temporary silence regarding Jesus' empty tomb (16:8), Mary Magdalene "told those who had been with Him" (16:10) just as the angel had commanded her and the other women earlier in the day (16:7). Thus, Mark defined what he meant when he wrote "they said nothing to anyone." They said nothing **for a time**, and then later bore witness of Jesus' resurrection to the disciples.

ON WHAT DAY DID JESUS RISE FROM THE DEAD?

Matthew 12:40; 17:23; Mark 8:31;

Luke 9:22; Acts 10:40

The most frequent reference to Jesus' resurrection reveals that He arose from the grave **on** the third day of His entombment. Matthew and Luke both record Jesus as prophesying that He would rise from the grave on this day (Matthew 17:23; Luke 9:22). The apostle Paul wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians that Jesus arose from the grave "**the third day** according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:4). And while preaching to Cornelius and his household, Peter taught that God raised Jesus up "**on** the third day" (Acts 10:40). Skeptics are quick to contend, however, that these scriptures contradict various other passages. For example, Jesus predicted that He would "be killed, and **after** three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). On another occasion, Jesus told His apostles how His enemies "will mock Him and spit upon Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him, and three days **later** He will rise again" (Mark 10:34, NASB). In addition, He informed the Pharisees that He would be

in the heart of the Earth for as long as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish—for “three days and three nights” (Matthew 12:40). How can a person be expected to believe that Jesus rose from the grave if Jesus and the Bible writers could not even decide whether He rose from the grave on the third day or the fourth day?

In an attempt to solve this difficulty, some seemingly well-meaning individuals have espoused the idea that Jesus must have been crucified on Wednesday or Thursday, rather than on Friday.¹⁶ Because Jesus could not possibly have been in the grave for three nights if He died on Friday and rose on Sunday, some believe He must have died a day or two earlier. However, this seems very unlikely. First, Mark 15:42 states that the evening of Christ’s crucifixion “was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,” and “[b]oth the Scriptures (Matt 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14,31,42) and Josephus indicate the day of preparation is the day before the weekly Sabbaths, namely, Friday.”¹⁷ Second, if Jesus died on Wednesday and rose on Sunday then He must have risen from the grave on the fourth day rather than “the third day.” What’s more, all attempts to place Jesus’ crucifixion and burial on Wednesday or Thursday instead of Friday are based more on a misunderstanding of a Hebrew idiom concerning time than actual evidence.

While to 21st-century readers, statements such as “on the third day,” “after three days,” and “three days and three nights” may appear at first glance to contradict one another, in reality they harmonize perfectly if one understands the more liberal methods ancients used when reckoning time. In the first century, any part of a

day could be computed for the whole day and the night following it.¹⁸ The *Jerusalem Talmud* quotes rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, who lived around A.D. 100, as saying: “A day and night are an Onah [‘a portion of time’] and the portion of an Onah is as the whole of it.”¹⁹ Azariah indicated that a portion of a twenty-four hour period could be considered the same “as the whole of it.” Thus, in Jesus’ time one would have been correct in teaching that Jesus’ burial would last “three days and three nights,” even though it was not three complete 24-hour days.

Scripture is peppered with references which demonstrate that a part of a day was oftentimes equivalent to a whole day.

- According to Genesis 7:12, the rain of the Noahic Flood was upon the Earth “forty days and forty nights.” Verse seventeen of that same chapter says it was on the Earth for just “forty days.” Obviously, “forty days” and “forty days and forty nights” refer to the same time period.
- During the reign of King Ahab, Israel and Syria “encamped opposite each other **for seven days**” (1 Kings 20:29). Yet, “**on** the seventh day the battle was joined” and Israel killed 100,000 Syrian foot soldiers (20:29). Clearly, the two armies did not occupy their camps for a full seven days, but for six days and a part of the seventh. The remainder of day seven was spent in battle.
- When Joseph’s brothers came to visit him for the first time since selling him into Egyptian bondage more than a decade earlier (Genesis 37:12-36), Joseph incarcerated them for “three days” (Genesis 42:17). The text then reveals that he spoke to them “**the** third day,” and 42:18-24 represents them as being released that day—i.e., the third day. If Joseph’s brothers (with the

exception of Simeon, 42:24) were released on day three of their imprisonment, then the “three days” they spent in the prison (42:17) is not equivalent to three 24-hour periods, but rather parts of three days.

- When Israel visited King Rehoboam and asked him to lighten their burdens (2 Chronicles 10:3-4), he wanted time to contemplate their request, so he instructed Jeroboam and the people of Israel to return “**after three days**” (10:5). Verse twelve of that chapter indicates that Jeroboam and the people of Israel came to Rehoboam “**on the third day, as the king had directed, saying, ‘Come back to me the third day.’**” Fascinating, is it not, that even though Rehoboam instructed his people to return “**after three days,**” they understood him to mean “**on the third day**” (cf. 1 Kings 12:5,12)?
- When Queen Esther was about to risk her life by going before King Ahasuerus uninvited, she instructed her fellow Jews to follow her example by not eating or drinking “**for three days, night or day**” (Esther 4:16). Yet, the text goes on to tell us that Esther went in unto the king “**on the third day**” (5:1).

By studying these and other passages, one clearly can see that the Bible uses expressions like “three days,” “the third day,” “on the third day,” “after three days,” and “three days and three nights” to signify the same period of time. Again, “[a]ccording to the Oriental mode of reckoning, three consecutive **parts** of days were counted three days.”²⁰

Further insight into the ancient practice of counting consecutive days (in part or in whole) as complete days can be gleaned from Acts chapter 10. Luke recorded how an angel appeared to Cornelius at “[a]bout the

ninth hour of the day” (approximately 3:00 p.m.; 10:3). **“The next day”** (10:9) Peter received a vision from God and welcomed visitors sent by Cornelius. **“On the next day”** (10:23) Peter and the servants of Cornelius departed for Caesarea. **“And the following day** they entered Caesarea” where Peter taught Cornelius and his household the Gospel (10:24). At one point during Peter’s visit, Cornelius spoke about his encounter with the angel of God. Notice carefully how he began the rehearsal of the event. He stated: **“Four days ago to this hour,** I was praying in my house during the ninth hour...” (10:30, NASB). Although the event really had occurred only 72 hours (or three literal days) earlier, Cornelius spoke of it as taking place “four days ago to this hour.” Why four days instead of three? Because according to the method of reckoning time in the first century, a part of the first day and a part of the fourth day were often counted as whole days. Surely one can see how this information aligns itself perfectly with Jesus’ burial taking place on Friday and His resurrection occurring on Sunday. A part of Friday, all day Saturday, and a part of Sunday would be considered three days in ancient times, not one or two.

Even though in 21st-century America some may find this reasoning somewhat confusing, similar idiomatic expressions frequently are used today. For example, we consider a baseball game that ends after only completing 8½ innings a “9-inning game.” And even though the losing pitcher on the visiting team only pitched 8 innings (and not 9 innings like the winning pitcher from the home team), he is said to have pitched a **complete** game. Think about the college student who explains to

his professor that he worked on a research project “day and night for four weeks.” He obviously does not mean that he worked for a solid 672 hours (24 hours x 7 days x 4 weeks) without sleeping. It may be that he worked from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. for four weeks on the project, but not 672 sleepless hours. If he only slept five or six hours a night, and worked on the project nearly every hour he was awake, we would consider this person as one who truly did work “day and night for four weeks.” Finally, consider the guest at a hotel who checks in at 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, and checks out at 5:30 p.m. Thursday—less than 24 hours later. Did the man stay one day or two days at the hotel? Technically, the guest was there for less than one full day (24-hour period), yet the hotel legally can charge him for two days since he did not leave before the mandatory 11:00 a.m. checkout time. Considering how flexible certain things pertaining to time are in 21st-century America, perhaps we should not be surprised how liberal the ancients could be at calculating time.

Further evidence proving that Jesus’ statements regarding His burial were not contradictory center on the fact that even His enemies did not accuse Him of contradicting Himself. No doubt this was due to their familiarity with the flexible, customary method of stating time. In fact, the chief priests and Pharisees even said to Pilate the day after Jesus was crucified: “Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘**After** three days I will rise.’ Therefore command that the tomb be made secure **until** the third day” (Matthew 27:63-64). The phrase “after three days” must have been equivalent to “the third day,” else surely the Pharisees would have asked for a guard of soldiers until the

fourth day. Interesting, is it not, that 21st-century skeptics charge Jesus with contradicting Himself, but not the hypercritical Pharisees of His own day?

The idiomatic expressions that Jesus and the Bible writers employed regarding how long Jesus would remain in the grave does not mean that He literally was buried for 72 hours. If we interpret the account of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection in light of the cultural setting of the first century, and not according to the present-day (mis)understanding of skeptics, we find no errors in all of the expressions that Jesus and the gospel writers used.

UNTOUCHABLE?

John 20:17,27; Matthew 28:9

Sometimes it is the case that the enemies of Christ actually read the Bible before making allegations about its writers being uninformed or contradictory. At other times, however, Bible critics, even prominent skeptics, make such assertions about various Bible passages that one cannot help but wonder what book they are reading (or if they are reading the Bible at all). Take, for example, an accusation that appeared in 2005 on arguably the most well-known skeptical website in America. When commenting on Jesus' statement to Mary Magdalene, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17, KJV), Steve Wells wrote:

Jesus tells Mary Magdalene not to touch him because he hasn't yet ascended—as if the touch of a woman would defile him and somehow prevent him from ascending into heaven. One wonders why he insisted that Thomas touch him later that

evening (Jn. 20:27), and why he permitted his apostles to touch him and hold him by the feet before his ascension (Mt. 28:9). Was it OK to touch the risen Jesus?²¹

Although the name of the site (www.skepticsannotated-bible.com) may initially leave the impression that Wells has meticulously pored over the pages of Scripture while writing his notes of criticism, remarks such as this one shed much light on how “carefully” he read his Bible before criticizing it.

First, the apostle Thomas did not come into physical contact with Jesus on the same day that Jesus instructed Mary Magdalene not to “touch” Him. In fact, only ten verses following Jesus’ instruction to Mary Magdalene, the apostle John wrote: “And **after eight days** His disciples were again inside...” (20:26). It was at this time (eight days after appearing to Mary Magdalene) that Jesus told Thomas to examine the holes in his hands and side—not as Wells alleged, “later that evening” after Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene.

Second, Wells followed the erroneous statement about Thomas with another one, saying: “One wonders...why he [Jesus—EL] permitted his apostles to touch him and hold him by the feet before his ascension (Mt. 28:9).”²² Allegedly, if Jesus did not allow Mary Magdalene to touch Him (John 20:17), then He should not have permitted the apostles to touch and hold Him by the feet, as is supposedly recorded in Matthew 28:9. The problem is, Matthew 28:9 refers, not to the apostles, but to Jesus’ appearance to the **women** who had come to visit His tomb, as is confirmed by both the context and the use of **feminine** pronouns. [“Jesus met them (Greek *autais*),

saying, ‘Rejoice!’ So they (Greek *ai*) came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him”—Matthew 28:9.] Had this Bible critic **really** taken the time to see what the passage was saying, surely he would not have made such elementary mistakes.

Third, considering how compassionate Jesus was to both men **and** women, it is blasphemous to insinuate that He was in some way intolerant of women and thought that they (as opposed to men) might defile His risen body. This was the Man Who touched the hand of Peter’s mother-in-law and healed her (Matthew 8:15), allowed a sick woman to touch the hem of His garment and be healed (Matthew 9:20-22), took the hand of Jairus’s daughter and raised her from the dead (Mark 5:22-43), touched a woman crippled for 18 years and restored her to health (Luke 13:10-13), and permitted Mary, Lazarus’ sister, to anoint Him with oil and wipe His feet with her hair (John 11:2). Jesus was not the male chauvinist that critics sometimes suggest.

Furthermore, the Greek verb *‘aptou*, translated “touch” in John 20:17 by the translators of the King James Version, can mean more than a mere touch of the skin. Among other things, it can refer to sexual contact (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:1), contact made with the intent of causing harm (cf. 1 John 5:18), and “to fasten one’s self to, adhere to, cling to.”²³ Greek lexicographers Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich noted that in John 20:17 the verb means to “cling to.”²⁴ Thus, Jesus was telling Mary Magdalene, “Do not cling to me” (NKJV); “Do not hold on to me” (NIV). He was not intimating that the actual contact with human flesh would somehow defile Him (cf. Matthew 28:9; John 20:17).

Exactly why Jesus previously told Mary Magdalene not to cling to Him (John 20:17), but later permitted certain women to hold His feet and worship Him following His resurrection (Matthew 28:9), and instructed Thomas eight days later to touch the holes in his hands and side (John 20:27), we simply are not told. What we know is that following His resurrection, Jesus wanted the women (including Mary Magdalene) to inform the apostles about His resurrection. Mary Magdalene was not to remain in her present location clinging to Jesus, but to “go” and inform the others of the good news. What’s more, the women to whom Jesus appeared shortly thereafter, although permitted for a moment to hold His feet and worship Him, were likewise told to “go” and take the brethren a message from their living Lord. (These women may not have been told exactly what Mary Magdalene was earlier told, but in order to “go” they had to “let go” of Jesus’ feet. Thus, what is explicitly stated in John 20:17 is actually implied in Matthew 28:9-10.)

Finally, the situation with Jesus instructing Thomas to touch His nail-scarred hands and punctured side was a separate circumstance altogether. The purpose on that occasion was to prove to Thomas (who earlier had said, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe”—John 20:25) that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. The wounds served as evidence to this doubter that this was Jesus—his “Lord” and “God” (John 20:28).

If Christ’s critics, like Steve Wells and others, would look at the Scriptures more carefully (and fairly), and

cease spreading false accusations about Jesus, their eyes might be opened (as were Thomas's) to the proof of Christ's deity. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

DID JESUS HAVE THE SAME PHYSICAL BODY AFTER HIS RESURRECTION AS *BEFORE*?

Luke 24:31,37; John 20:10-16

A gentleman once e-mailed our offices at Apologetics Press, questioning whether Jesus had the same body after His resurrection as He did before being raised from the grave. According to this man, Jesus "appeared to people He knew but nobody recognized Him.... It's as though He had a different body"—and possibly one that was not physical.

At the outset, it is incorrect to assert that "nobody recognized Him," because Matthew 28:9,17 clearly implies that at least some of Jesus' disciples knew Who He was and worshiped Him. Moreover, that Jesus had essentially the same physical body after His resurrection that He had when He died on the cross is evident from at least three different passages. In Luke 24:39, Jesus stated: "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." Jesus expected His disciples to observe **His physical** body. Later in the same chapter, we read that Jesus ate a meal with His disciples (24:42-43; cf. Acts 10:41). And then in John 20:25-29, which is the most frequently cited passage in defense of Christ's having His same physical body, Thomas was asked to

touch Jesus' nail-scarred hands and reach into His side that had been pierced with the Roman spear.

But what about those occasions when some of His disciples did not recognize Him? Do such verses as Luke 24:31,37 and John 20:10-16 represent a contradictory element in the resurrection story? First, just because the text says that the disciples thought they had seen a spirit when they actually saw Jesus (Luke 24:37), does not indicate that He looked different. Since they knew He had been killed, seeing His resurrected body caused them to think that He was in spirit form rather than physical. On one occasion, before Jesus was ever crucified and raised from the grave, His disciples were startled at His appearance, supposing He was a ghost (Mark 6:49). A similar thing happened to Peter when some thought his unexpected presence must be an indication that “[i]t is his angel” (Acts 12:15).

Second, the reason the two disciples who were traveling on the road to Emmaus failed to recognize Jesus initially was not because Jesus had a different body, but because God had miraculously prevented them from recognizing Him. Luke 24:16 indicates that at the beginning of their conversation with Jesus “their eyes were restrained,” but then just before Jesus vanished from their sight, “their eyes were opened and they knew Him” (24:31). Thus, the disciples’ “recognition ability” failed, not because Jesus possessed a different body, but because their eyes were miraculously restrained.

A final person often mentioned as not having recognized the Savior (allegedly because Jesus had a different body) is Mary Magdalene. John 20:11-18 certainly testifies

of her initial inability to identify Jesus. The question is: Was Mary's failure to recognize Jesus **her** fault, or the result of Jesus having a different body? As with the aforementioned cases, there is no indication in John 20:11-18 that Jesus had anything other than His risen crucified body (cf. 20:25-29). There are at least four possibilities, however, as to why Mary failed to recognize Jesus right at first.

1. The Sun may not have risen all the way yet, thus making it difficult to see (cf. 20:1).
2. Mary was engaged in deep weeping that likely obscured her vision (20:11,13). In fact, the first words Jesus said to Mary were, "Woman, why are you weeping?" (vs. 15).
3. Considering Jesus' clothes were taken from Him when He was crucified (John 19:23-24), and that the linen cloths which were used in His burial were lying in the tomb (John 20:6-7), Jesus likely was wearing clothes that made His exact identity less conspicuous at first glance. Perhaps His post-resurrection attire was similar to what a gardener or watchman would wear (cf. John 20:15).
4. It also is possible that Mary's eyes were restrained miraculously, as were the disciples with whom Jesus conversed on the road to Emmaus.

Once all of the Scriptures are taken in to account, one can see that Jesus physically rose from the grave in essentially the same body that was crucified on the cross. The fact that some of Jesus' disciples did not

immediately recognize Him in no way contradicts His physical resurrection.

DID JESUS BEGIN HIS ASCENSION WHILE IN A PHYSICAL BODY?

Some time ago a gentleman presented what he thought was an “insurmountable problem” for the Christian who claims that “Jesus physically rose from the grave in essentially **the same body** that was crucified on the cross.” Allegedly, since God is spirit, Who lives in the spiritual heavens, it was necessary for Jesus to die a second time in order to shed His earthly body. And, since there is no mention of Jesus shedding this body before ascending into heaven, one supposedly cannot justifiably conclude that He physically rose from the grave.

A brief consultation of Scripture, however, reveals that such argumentation is extremely irrational. First, if Almighty God could create that which is visible from that which is invisible (Hebrews 11:3; cf. Genesis 1), then it is logical to conclude that the same omnipotent God can turn a physical body into a celestial, immortal body simply by willing it to happen. Recall that Jesus once turned water into wine simply by desiring it to happen (and not by adding grapes, sugar, food coloring, etc.—John 2:1-10). What’s more, He miraculously healed a centurion’s servant (who was not even in His presence), by merely willing it to “be done” (Matthew 8:13). Could this same Jesus not choose to change into His glorified, celestial body at some point before sitting down “at the right hand of God” in heaven (Mark 16:19)? Could the Father not simply will it to be done? To ask is to answer.

Second, the Bible never suggests that the angels who appeared on Earth in the past in human form had to “die” in order to get their former celestial bodies back. Before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jehovah and two of His angels appeared in human form and ate a meal prepared by Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18:8). The two angels later entered Sodom and ate another meal with Lot before warning him to flee the wicked city (Genesis 19:3). Would anyone advocate that these angels (and even Jehovah Himself) had to experience physical death before re-entering their heavenly home? If not, why would one conclude that Christ needed to die again physically (following His resurrection) before ascending up into heaven?

Finally, Jesus did not have to die a second time in order to transform into His celestial body any more than Christians (who will be alive when Jesus returns) will have to die before receiving their celestial, immortal bodies. The apostle Paul addressed this very point in one of his epistles to the church at Corinth.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.** For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and **we shall be changed.** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying

that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory”
(1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

He also wrote to the church at Thessalonica about this subject.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then **we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds** to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

According to Paul, there will be Christians living on Earth when Jesus returns. Before entering heaven, these individuals will not have to die first. Rather, God simply will “change” their bodies into “incorruptible” bodies “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.” Exactly how this is going to happen and what these bodies will be like, we are not told. What we do know is that those living when Jesus returns will not have to go through a “death and burial” before getting their new bodies.

To argue that Jesus’ resurrection was not a physical, bodily resurrection based upon the assumption that He would have had to die again (in order to put off that old body) before ascending into heaven simply is not a biblical, rational argument. Based upon the aforementioned scriptures (and others—cf. 2 Kings 2), one can be assured that in the past God has chosen to change the spiritual into physical and physical into spiritual simply by willing it to happen. What’s more, He will do so again at the end of time when those “who are alive and remain”

(1 Thessalonians 4:17) will “be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51) and “caught up...in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

CONCLUSION

The inspired accounts of the risen Redeemer have been the focus of much criticism through the years. However, when the honest, open-hearted student of the Bible looks carefully at the evidence, he will come to realize that these criticisms are actually the result of insufficient knowledge, unproven assumptions, and/or hardened hearts. Truly, the more one studies the passages of Scripture in which Jesus’ resurrection is discussed, as well as the historical context in which this momentous event occurred, the more he will see how incredibly accurate, and thus trustworthy, the Bible writers were.

Chapter 10



MISCELLANEOUS ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS

ISHMAELITES OR MIDIANITES?

Genesis 37:27,36; 39:1

While enjoying a meal and listening to their brother Joseph cry out from the pit into which they had cast him, the sons of Jacob (minus Reuben) noticed a group of merchants coming from Gilead. Rather than killing Joseph and concealing his body, the band of brothers chose to “sell him to the Ishmaelites” (Genesis 37:27). The Ishmaelites, in turn, took Joseph down to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard (39:1). Skeptics charge that the author of Genesis erred when writing about the details of Joseph being sold into slavery. They insist that a clear contradiction exists

because Genesis 37:36 says that “the **Midianites**” sold Joseph “in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard,” whereas Genesis 39:1 indicates that Joseph was sold to Potiphar by the **Ishmaelites**.

The casual reader of the Bible might be troubled by the different names given in Genesis 37:36 and 39:1. After a thorough study of the Scriptures, however, one can easily see that the names “Ishmaelites” and “Midianites” are used interchangeably. The book of Judges records that after Gideon and his 300 mighty men defeated their enemy,

the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from **the hand of Midian...**” Then Gideon said to them, “I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder.” For they [those whom Gideon and his men had just conquered] had golden earrings, because **they were Ishmaelites...** Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which were on **the kings of Midian** (Judges 8:22,24,26).

After Gideon had delivered the Israelites from the hand of Midian, he requested the golden earrings that the Israelites had plundered. Plundered from whom? From those whom Gideon and the Israelites had just conquered. And who were they? Like Moses, in his inspired historical narrative concerning Joseph, the inspired writer of Judges referred to the people of Midian as Ishmaelites.

The Midianites and Ishmaelites mentioned in Genesis

chapters 37 and 39 were the same group of traders. This is not a contradiction; nor is it proof that Genesis was written by different authors.

WHO WROTE ON THE SECOND PAIR OF TABLETS?

Exodus 34:27-28; Deuteronomy 10:1-4

After Moses broke the first tablets of stone that the Lord gave him on Mount Sinai, God commanded him to cut out two tablets of stone (like the first ones) and present himself to Him at the top of Mount Sinai—again (Exodus 34:1-2). Skeptics claim the Bible teaches in Exodus 34 that Moses wrote on this second pair of tablets, whereas in Deuteronomy 10 it says that God is the One Who wrote on these tablets. Based upon this difference, they allege that a blatant contradiction exists. A closer examination of these passages, however, reveals that they are not contradictory, but rather complementary and consistent with each other.

We readily admit that Deuteronomy 10 teaches that God was the One Who wrote on the second pair of tablets. Verses 1-4 of that chapter say:

At that time the Lord said to me [Moses], “Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an ark of wood. And I [God] **will write on the tablets** the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; and you shall put them in the ark.” So I [Moses] made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand. And **He [God] wrote on the tablets** according to the

first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the Lord had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the Lord gave them to me.

This passage teaches that Moses hewed the tablets out of rock, but that God was the One Who wrote on them. Skeptics agree.

The controversial passage found in Exodus 34 states: “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.’ So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And **He** wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments” (34:27-28). Based upon this passage, critics of the Bible’s inerrancy suggest that Moses, not God, wrote on the second pair of tablets. Thus they conclude that Exodus 34 and Deuteronomy 10 contradict one another.

Admittedly, at first glance it seems these verses teach that: (1) Moses was commanded to write the words on the second pair of tablets; and (2) after he was commanded to do so, he (Moses) actually “wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant.” But what may seem at first glance to be the correct interpretation of a passage is sometimes not the case, especially when the context of the passage is ignored. The words that God instructed Moses to write were “these words,” which He had spoken in the preceding verses (i.e., 34:10-26—the ceremonial and judicial injunctions, not the ten “words” of Exodus 20:2-17). The re-writing of the Ten Commandments on the newly prepared slabs was done by God’s own hand. God specifically stated in the first

verse of Exodus 34 that He (not Moses) would write the same words that had been written on the first tablets of stone that Moses broke. In verse 28 of that chapter, we have it on record that God did what He said He would do in verse one (cf. Deuteronomy 10:2-4). The only thing verse 27 teaches is that Moses wrote the list of regulations given in verses 10-26. That these regulations were not the Ten Commandments is obvious in that there are not even ten of them listed.¹

Contrary to what skeptics allege, Exodus 34 and Deuteronomy 10 are not contradictory. Moses was not acting under divine direction to physically write the Decalogue on the second pair of tablets. Rather, as Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown recognized in their commentary on Deuteronomy, “God Himself...made the inscription a second time with His own hand, to testify of the importance He attached to the Ten Commandments.”²

WHO KILLED KING SAUL?

1 Samuel 31:4; 2 Samuel 1:1-10; 21:12;
1 Chronicles 10:13-14

Bible critics have long been fond of pointing out the differences in Scripture regarding how King Saul died. In fact, on most any extensive list of Old Testament “contradictions” is “the death of Saul.” In his book *Biblical Errancy*, Dennis McKinsey highlighted 1 Samuel 31:4, 2 Samuel 21:12, 2 Samuel 1:8-10, and 1 Chronicles 10:14 in his section titled simply “Contradictions.”³ Skeptic Steve Wells listed these verses in *The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible* (printed edition) as contradiction #197, asking the simple question, “How did Saul die?”⁴

So what does the Bible actually say about the death of King Saul?

- First Samuel 31 reveals that Saul “was severely wounded by the archers” (31:3) in Israel’s battle with the Philistines. In fact, it appears that he knew he was mortally wounded because he instructed his armorbearer, saying, “Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me.’ But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore, **Saul took a sword and fell on it.** And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword, and died with him” (31:4-5).
- Second Samuel 1 indicates that an Amalekite came to David after Israel’s defeat, presenting him with Saul’s crown and bracelet. The Amalekite told David that, after Saul was wounded and in agonizing pain, the king instructed him to kill him. “So,” the Amalekite said, “**I stood over him and killed him,** because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen” (1:8-10).
- Later in 2 Samuel, when David gathered and buried the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan, the inspired writer noted that “**the Philistines had struck down Saul**” (21:12).
- Lastly, the chronicler addressed the death of Saul in 1 Chronicles 10:13-14, saying, “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the Lord; therefore **He [the Lord] killed him,** and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.”

The skeptic wants to know whether Saul killed himself, or if he was killed by the Amalekite, the Philistines,

or God. How are these **verses** not, as Dennis McKinsey put it, “**versus**”?—“1 Samuel 31:4...**versus** 2 Samuel 21:12...**versus** 2 Samuel 1:8-10...**versus** 1 Chronicles 10:14.”⁵ How are these scriptures not contradictory?

Differentiating Between a Lie and Inspired Truth

The reader must keep in mind that the Bible writers recorded a number of lies made by various people. Satan lied to Eve (Genesis 3:4). Cain lied to God (Genesis 4:9). Samson lied to Delilah (Judges 16:1-22). David lied to Ahimelech (1 Samuel 21:1-2). The older prophet of 1 Kings 13 lied to the younger prophet—a lie that cost the younger prophet his life. Job’s “friends” repeatedly made false allegations about him throughout the book of Job. Jesus’ enemies frequently lied about Him. Etc. Keep in mind that many of the lies recorded in Scripture were told without further comment by the inspired writers. That is, the writers rarely stopped to identify and condemn the lies explicitly (e.g., Moses never explicitly called Satan’s statement in Genesis 3:4 a lie). Instead, the reader is expected to fairly infer what is implied (i.e., God told the truth, while Satan lied).

The young Amalekite in 2 Samuel 1:8-10 told a story that directly contradicts the inspired writer’s account only a few verses earlier. [NOTE: 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one book. Thus, 1 Samuel 31:4 and 2 Samuel 1:10 are only separated by 20 brief verses within the same book.] Furthermore, we would not even have the young Amalekite’s words were they not written down **by the writer of Samuel**. Are we really supposed

to conclude that the writer of Samuel could not recall who killed Saul within 20 verses?

Think about it: Who was lying in Genesis 2:17 and 3:4—God or Satan? Who was guilty of speaking falsehoods about Job—the inspired writer (Job 1:1), or Job’s “friendly” false accusers whom the writer quoted at length (e.g., Job 4-5; cf. 42:7-9)? To ask is to answer. Similarly, it should be relatively easy to differentiate between the **truthful** account of Saul’s death in 1 Samuel 31 and the **dishonest** report of the young Amalekite (recorded by the same penman) in 2 Samuel 1.

Why would the Amalekite lie, some ask? We are not told. Likely he thought his story, along with Saul’s crown and bracelet, would bring him favor with Saul’s worst enemy and the next king of Israel. He probably had in mind a reward of riches, honor, and power. Instead, David chose to execute him for having the audacity to end the life of (or at least **say** he ended the life of) a king previously chosen by God Himself (1 Samuel 9). The Amalekite alleged to do something that even David himself would not do (1 Samuel 24:6).

Did the Philistines Kill Saul?

Even if 2 Samuel 1 can be logically explained, what about 2 Samuel 21:12 where the reader is reminded that “the **Philistines** had struck down Saul”? How can this be true if Saul killed himself (1 Samuel 31:4-6)? Two brief responses should adequately and reasonably answer this inquiry.

First, the words “struck down” (NKJV; NASB; NIV) are translated from the Hebrew *nākāh*. According to

Brown, Driver, and Briggs, in their respected Hebrew lexicon, *nâkâh* can mean everything from “to strike, smite, hit,” and “beat,” to “kill.”⁶ In his Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, noted Hebrew scholar William Gesenius remarked that *nâkâh* can mean anything from striking to killing, but it is used “mostly in the sense of hurting.”⁷ The King James translators used various words to translate *nâkâh* throughout the Old Testament, including beat, smite, strike, punish, slay, kill, etc. The simple fact is, the penman of 2 Samuel 21:12 could easily have meant that King Saul was seriously struck down on Mount Gilboa, and not that the Philistines “killed him.”

Second, even if it could be proved that 2 Samuel 21:12 means the Philistines “killed” Saul in Gilboa, is there not a **legitimate, general sense** in which that term could be used? Consider the 21st-century soldier who is mortally wounded in the heat of battle but makes it to a hospital in time to be hooked up to a number of machines, which help to extend his life for a few days. If doctors later remove the ventilator, feeding tube, etc., from the soldier (at the family’s request), and he quickly dies, what might people truthfully report about the man’s death? Surely that he gave his life in the line of duty—that he was “struck down in the heat of battle” while valiantly serving his country. Did the family and doctors kill the soldier, or did the enemy? In one **immediate sense**, the soldier finally died after being “unplugged” from various life-sustaining machines. Yet, most everyone would fairly and sensibly see the reality of the matter: a courageous soldier was killed in battle.

In a similar way (though not so courageously), the wicked King Saul was apparently mortally wounded by

the Philistines. “The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was severely wounded” (1 Samuel 31:3). He knew he was “done for.” The battle was lost to the Philistines, and he chose to inflict the final, fatal blow upon himself rather than waiting for what he knew was inevitable. In a more immediate, literal sense, did Saul kill himself? Yes. Is there also a general sense in which one might honestly say the Philistines killed Saul? Surely most fair-minded people would say so.

Did God Kill Saul?

Many years later (between 500-450 B.C.),⁸ when the chronicler recorded his account of the events surrounding Saul’s death, he also wrote about the Philistine archers who struck Saul (1 Chronicles 10:3), as well as Saul’s subsequent decision to fall on his sword and die (10:4-5). However, the chronicler added the following: “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the Lord; **therefore He killed him**, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse” (10:13-14). Thus, the skeptics claim “contradiction” on this front as well. “How could God have killed Saul if Saul killed himself?”

In the same sense in which “the Lord set a king over” Israel (1 Samuel 12:13; cf. 10:24), the Lord “killed” Saul. Throughout Scripture, the Bible writers repeatedly testify to how God works and accomplishes things providentially (i.e., “God orchestrates His will through natural laws”).⁹ Did **Samuel** make Saul a king over Israel? Yes (1 Samuel 12:1). Did the Bible writer not also contend that

Israel “made Saul king”? Yes (1 Samuel 11:15). Still, God “was behind” it all. He knew, and His inspired writers prophesied hundreds of years earlier, that Israel would have a king (Genesis 36:31; Deuteronomy 17:14-15). God worked this out “behind the scenes,” while using Samuel and the children of Israel to accomplish His will.

In like manner, God knew ahead of time (1) **that** He was going to punish Saul for his sins, and (2) **how** He was going to punish Saul. In fact, He informed Saul of such retribution through the prophet Samuel. The God-inspired prophet revealed to Saul, “Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king” (1 Samuel 15:23). What’s more, God used the spirit of Samuel to speak to Saul from the realm of the dead. Exactly one day before Saul’s death, God arranged for the departed soul of Samuel to speak to Saul a divinely inspired message, saying,

[T]he Lord has done for Himself as He spoke by me. For the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord nor execute His fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore the Lord has done this thing to you this day. Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And **tomorrow you and your sons will be with me**. The Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines (1 Samuel 28:17-19).

Did the Lord use the Philistines to kill Saul? Yes. Was **God** working providentially to arrange such warranted capital punishment? Absolutely. God knew **what** He was going to do, **how** He was going to do it, and **when**

it would be accomplished. Indeed, as the chronicler recorded (1 Chronicles 10:13-14), there is a legitimate sense in which **God** justifiably killed Saul. Such Divine operation through various individuals and nations (such as the Philistines) is seen consistently throughout Scripture. The same God Who created the world with “the breath of His mouth” (Psalm 33:6), and the same God Who is currently “upholding all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3), is the same God Who has worked and currently is orchestrating His will through natural laws. Anyone who is very familiar with the Bible should not be surprised to read truthful expressions such as “He [God] killed him [Saul],” even if God did not actually “pull the trigger.”

Conclusion

Answering the question, “Who killed King Saul?” provides Bible students with a golden opportunity to be reminded of three vital principles of interpretation. First, context is always critical to any correct understanding of any account or conversation. Part of getting “context” is identifying “who is talking.” In the case of 2 Samuel 1, an uninspired Amalekite is alleging to have killed King Saul, and one should no more believe his claim than we should believe that Cain didn’t know where Abel was or Samson didn’t know from whence his strength came.

Second, remember that a “contradiction” is not a “contradiction” if words are used in different senses. In the case of “Who killed King Saul?” God, Saul, and the Philistines all truthfully “killed” him **in different senses**.

Third and finally, the Bible writers often harmoniously supplemented each other's accounts. Reading **all** accounts gives the Bible student the best understanding of anything and everything the Bible teaches.¹⁰ Since the “sum” or “entirety” of God’s “word is truth” (Psalm 119:160), we should refrain from lazy, faulty “partial” interpretations, and we should hunger for **all** of God’s Word, which when rightly divided, gives us the complete, truthful picture that God has painted for us.¹¹

MOTIVES MATTER

2 Kings 10:30; Hosea 1:4

In roughly 841 B.C., the commander of Israel’s army, Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, was anointed king over the northern kingdom, and was instructed by the Lord to “strike down the house of Ahab” and “cut off from Ahab all the males in Israel, both bond and free” (2 Kings 9:6-10). After receiving this command from the Lord via one of “the sons of the prophets” (9:1), Jehu began his assassination of Ahab’s family. He started by slaying Ahab’s son, Joram (also known as Jehoram), who was ruling Israel at the time Jehu was anointed king. He then proceeded to kill Ahaziah (the king of Judah and grandson of Jezebel—9:27-29) and 42 of Ahaziah’s brethren (10:12-14). Later, he slew (or had others slay) Jezebel (the mother of Joram and former wife of the deceased Ahab—9:30-37), all 70 sons of Ahab who were living in Samaria, and “all who remained to Ahab in Samaria” (10:1-10,17), and “all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel,” including “all his great men and his close acquaintances, and his priests” (10:11). Jehu’s final stop was at the temple of

Baal where, upon gathering all the Baal-worshipping leaders of Israel into the temple, he locked them up and had them massacred (10:18-27).

After Jehu had carried out his orders to obliterate all males from the house of Ahab, the Lord said to him, “Because you have done well in doing what is right in My sight, and have done to the house of Ahab all that was in My heart, your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation” (10:30). Jehu had taken the most thorough means of suppressing the idolatry in Israel, and thus was granted protection on his throne, along with his sons after him unto “the fourth generation.” The following chapters of 2 Kings indicate that the Lord was true to His word (as always; cf. Titus 1:2). Although the reigns of Jehu’s sons were described as kings who “did evil in the sight of the Lord,” God allowed them to reign to the fourth generation in order to fulfill His promise to Jehu.

Several years after the aforementioned events took place, the prophet Hosea expressed words that many skeptics have claimed are in opposition to what is stated in 2 Kings 9-10. When Gomer, Hosea’s wife, bore a son, Hosea declared that the Lord said, “Call his name Jezreel, for in a little while I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, and bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel” (1:4). Those attempting to discredit the Bible’s integrity argue that Hosea put himself into **obvious disagreement** with the inspired writer of 2 Kings, who thought that Jehu had done “all” that was in God’s heart. Skeptics claim that the author of 2 Kings heaped praise on Jehu for the Jezreel massacre, but Hosea contradicted him when he said that the Lord

would avenge the blood of Jezreel and end the reign of the house of Jehu in Israel.

What can be said about this “obvious disagreement”? Are these two passages harmonious, or is this a legitimate contradiction that should cause all Bible believers to reject the book that has been tried and tested for hundreds of years?

First, we cannot be 100% certain that Hosea 1:4 is referring to the events in 2 Kings 9-10. Although nearly all skeptics and Bible commentators link the two passages together, it must be understood that just because 2 Kings 9-10 is the only place in the Old Testament that describes suitable events located at Jezreel, it does not mean that Hosea **must** have been referring to those events. The honest student of God’s Word has to admit that Hosea may have been referring to Jehu’s sons who reigned after him. Perhaps his sons performed serious atrocities in Jezreel that are not recorded in 2 Kings. One cannot be certain that Hosea was indeed referring to the events recorded in 2 Kings 10. That said, likely these two passages **should** be linked together, and thus the alleged contradiction skeptics raise deserves an adequate explanation: How could God tell Jehu to destroy the house of Ahab, and then later condemn him (his house) through the words of Hosea for having done so?

The answer really is quite simple. As Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe observed: “God praised Jehu for obeying Him in destroying the house of Ahab, but condemned Jehu for his sinful motive in shedding their blood.”¹² Skeptics are fond of citing 2 Kings 10:30 to support their position, but they often “overlook” verses

29 and 31, which state: “Jehu did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, that is, from the golden calves that were at Bethel and Dan.... Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin.” Jehu obeyed God’s command to “strike down the house of Ahab” and utterly exterminate his descendants (2 Kings 9:7-8; 10:30), but he did not obey God in all that he did. The passage in 2 Kings 10:29-31 indicates that even though Jehu had done what God commanded, “he did so out of a carnal zeal that was tainted with protective self-interest.”¹³ It seems obvious that since Jehu followed in the footsteps of Israel’s first wicked king by worshipping false gods and not walking according to God’s law, he did not destroy Ahab’s descendants out of any devotion to the Lord. Furthermore, in commenting on Jehu’s actions, Gleason Archer noted:

The important principle set forth in Hosea 1:4 was that when blood is shed, even in the service of God and in obedience to His command, blood-guiltiness attaches to God’s agent himself if his motive was tainted with carnal self-interest rather than by a sincere concern for the purity of the faith and the preservation of God’s truth (such as, for example, animated Elijah when he had the 450 prophets of Baal put to death after the contest with them on Mount Carmel).¹⁴

Considering Jehu’s actions by examining the motives behind those actions, solves the alleged contradiction. Jehu’s failure to obey God’s commands, and depart from the sins of Jeroboam, reveals that he would have equally disobeyed the other commands as well, had it been

contrary to his own desires. The story of Jehu's conquest teaches a great lesson, which Albert Barnes acknowledged in his commentary on Hosea: "[I]f we do what is the will of God for any end of our own, for anything except God, we do, in fact, our own will, not God's."¹⁵ Indeed, just as the apostle Paul taught in his discourse on love—motives matter (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)!

THE TEMPLE'S PILLAR AND CAPITAL HEIGHTS

2 Chronicles 3:15; 1 Kings 7:15-16;
2 Kings 25:17; Jeremiah 52:21-22

When King Solomon built his magnificent Temple, he constructed two 18-cubit-high bronze pillars and set them by the vestibule in the front of the Temple (2 Chronicles 3:15; NOTE: A cubit is approximately 18 inches). He even gave them names: Jachin on the right, and Boaz on the left (1 Kings 7:21). On the top of each hollow pillar was a five-cubit-high capital (called chapter in the KJV), covered with "nets of network," "twisted threads of chainwork," and rows of pomegranates (1 Kings 7:17-18,20, NASB).

When one compares the various biblical accounts that address the Temple pillars and capitals (1 Kings 7; 2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 3; Jeremiah 52), two questions immediately come to mind. First, why does 2 Chronicles 3:15 indicate that the two 18-cubit-high pillars (1 Kings 7:15; 2 Kings 25:17; Jeremiah 52:21) were "thirty-five cubits" high? Second, were the pillar capitals "five cubits" high, as mentioned in 1 Kings 7:16 and Jeremiah 52:22, or "three cubits," as recorded in 2 Kings 25:17?

At least three feasible explanations exist for the variation in the heights of the temple pillars. First, it may be that whereas 1 Kings 7:15, 2 Kings 25:17, and Jeremiah 52:21 give only the height of the pillars, the chronicler also included the heights of the base, the capitals, and all other decorations on the pillars. Consider a somewhat parallel illustration of two people measuring the height of a modern church building. One person climbs the steps and measures from the floor of the porch to the underside of the roof, and obtains a measure of 25 feet. Another person, however, measures from the base of the building, up the seven steps, over the roof, to the top of the steeple. He calculates the height at 55 feet. Is it possible for both calculations to be accurate? Indeed. They are accurate measurements of what the inspectors chose to include in the “height of the church building.” Regarding the temple pillars, it may be that the figure in 2 Chronicles simply includes more materials than the number recorded in 1 and 2 Kings and Jeremiah.

Second, it is also possible that the height of each pillar was more specifically $17\frac{1}{2}$ cubits, or that a half of a cubit of each pillar was hidden in the roundness of the capitals, and that the number 35 represents the length of both pillars added together. Interestingly, 2 Chronicles 3:15 does **not** indicate that “each” pillar was 35 cubits high, but simply that the “two pillars” were “thirty-five cubits high.” Translators of the New International Version believed this explanation was probable, and actually inserted “together” (in brackets) into their translation of 2 Chronicles 3:15. Thus, “in the front of the temple he made two pillars, which [**together**] were thirty-five cubits long.”

Third, it is **possible** that one or more ancient scribes confused the Hebrew numeral letters ןג (35) for ןי (18). Similar to how printing companies today can make slight errors when printing copies of the Bible, and just as copyists' errors can be found in various historical works (e.g., Tacitus, Josephus, etc.) without corrupting the overall integrity of the text, occasionally Bible readers will come across numbers, names, etc. that are the result of copyists' errors—not mistakes by the original inspired writers. (For a lengthy discussion on copyists' errors, see chapter seven.)

So what about the capital heights? Why does 2 Kings 25:17 refer to them as being three cubits high, rather than five? As with the pillar heights, it is possible that the numeral “three” represents a copyist's error. The Hebrew numeral letter ג (3) in 2 Kings 25:17 may have been mistakenly put for ה (5), as is found in 1 Kings 7:16 and Jeremiah 52:22. However, another explanation, which John Wesley postulated in the 18th century, also exists. In his commentary on 1 Kings, he suggested “the word chapter is taken either more largely for the whole, so it is five cubits; or, more strictly, either for the pommels..., 2 Chronicles 4:12, or for the cornice or crown, and so it was but three cubits, to which the pomegranates being added make it four cubits..., and the other work upon it took up one cubit more, which in all made five cubits.”¹⁶ Thus, both “three” and “five” could be correct, depending on exactly what the writers were including in the measurement of the capitals.

What are the correct answers to the questions at hand? Why **exactly** do differences exist in the numbers given for the pillar and capital heights? No one can be

certain. But reasonable answers can be offered without assuming the original penmen erred.

SEEING GOD “FACE TO FACE”?

John 1:18; Exodus 33:20; Genesis 32:30

In the 2009 Kyle Butt/Dan Barker debate, Dan Barker alleged that He “knows” the God of the Bible cannot exist because “there are mutually incompatible properties/characteristics of the God that’s in this book [the Bible—EL] that rule out the possibility of His existence.”¹⁷ One of the supposed contradictions that Barker mentioned was that God claims invisibility, yet has been seen.¹⁸ Since biblical passages such as Exodus 33:20-23, John 1:18, and 1 John 4:12 teach that God cannot be seen, while other scriptures indicate that man has seen God and spoken to him “face to face” (Exodus 33:11; Genesis 32:30), allegedly “the God of the Bible does not exist.”

Although in modern times words are regularly used in many different senses (e.g., hot and cold; good and bad), Barker, like so many Bible critics, has dismissed the possibility that the terms in the aforementioned passages were used in different senses. Throughout Scripture, however, words are often used in various ways. In James 2:5, the term “poor” refers to material wealth, whereas the term “rich” has to do with a person’s spiritual well-being. In Philippians 3:12,15, Paul used the term “perfect” (NASB) in different senses. Although Paul had attained spiritual maturity (“perfection”) in Christ (vs. 15), he had not yet attained the perfect “final thing, the victor’s prize of the heavenly calling in Christ Jesus.”¹⁹ Similarly, in one sense man has seen God, but in another sense he has not.

Consider the first chapter of John where we learn that in the beginning Jesus was with God and “was God” (1:1; cf. 14,17). Though John wrote that Jesus “became flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14), he indicated only four sentences later that “[n]o one has seen God at any time” (1:18; 1 John 4:12). Was Jesus God? Yes. Did man see Jesus? Yes. So in what sense has man not seen God? No human has ever seen Jesus in His true image (i.e., as a spirit Being—John 4:24—in **all** of His fullness, glory, and splendor). When God, the Word, appeared on Earth 2,000 years ago, He came in a veiled form. In his letter to the church at Philippi, the apostle Paul mentioned that Christ—Who had existed in heaven “in the form of God”—“made Himself of no reputation,” and took on the “likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6-7). Mankind saw an embodiment of deity as Jesus dwelt on Earth in the form of a man. Men saw “the Word” that “became flesh.” Likewise, when Jacob “struggled with God” (Genesis 32:28), He saw only a form of God, not the spiritual, invisible, omnipresent God Who fills heaven and Earth (Jeremiah 23:23-24).

But what about those statements which indicate that man saw or spoke to God “face to face”? Jacob said, “I have seen God face to face” (Genesis 32:30). Gideon proclaimed: “I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face” (Judges 6:22). Exodus 33:11 affirms that “the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” First, although these men witnessed great and awesome things, they still only saw manifestations of God and a part of His glory (cf. Exodus 33:18-23). Second, the words “face” and “face to face” are used in different senses in Scripture. Though Exodus 33:11

reveals that God spoke to Moses “face to face,” only nine verses later God told Moses, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live” (33:20). Are we to believe (as Barker and other critics assert) that the author of Exodus was so misguided that he wrote contradictory statements within only nine verses of each other? Surely not. What then does the Bible mean when it says that God “knew” (Deuteronomy 34:10) or “spoke to Moses face to face” (Exodus 33:11)? The answer is found in Numbers 12. Aaron and Miriam had spoken against Moses and arrogantly asked: “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?” (Numbers 12:2). God then appeared to Aaron and Miriam, saying: “If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a **vision**; I speak to him in a **dream**. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. **I speak with him face to face**, even **plainly**, and **not in dark sayings**; and he sees the form of the Lord” (Numbers 12:6-8). Notice the contrast: God spoke to the prophets of Israel through visions and dreams, but to Moses He spoke, “not in dark sayings,” but “plainly.” In other words, God, Who **never showed His face** to Moses (Exodus 33:20), nevertheless allowed Moses to see “some unmistakable evidence of His glorious presence,”²⁰ and spoke to him “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (33:11), i.e., He spoke to Moses plainly, directly, etc.

The Bible does not reveal “mutually incompatible characteristics of God” as Barker has alleged. His assertions in no way prove that the God of the Bible does not exist or that the Bible is unreliable. In truth, Barker’s comments merely reveal that he is a dishonest

interpreter of Scripture. If Barker can work “side by side” with a colleague without literally working inches from him,²¹ or if he can see “eye to eye” with a fellow atheist without ever literally looking into the atheist’s eyes, then Barker can understand that God could speak “face to face” with Moses without literally revealing to him His full, glorious “face.”

DID JESUS ACTUALLY SPEAK TO THE CENTURION?

Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10

According to Matthew 8:5, “when Jesus had entered Capernaum, **a centurion came to Him**, pleading with Him” to heal his servant. On the other hand, Luke notes that when the centurion “heard about Jesus, **he sent elders of the Jews to Him**, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant” (Luke 7:3; cf. 7:6). How can both of these accounts be true? Are they contradictory, as skeptics allege, or can they be reasonably and justly harmonized?

To help answer these questions, consider a scenario where the President of the United States sends two individuals from his administration to your house with an official invitation to dine at the White House. What might you **truthfully** tell your friends about this encounter? To one friend, you might give every detail, describing the **two individuals** who came to your house, what **they** said to you, and how you responded to **them**, etc. To another friend, you might simply say, “The **President** has asked me to come to eat at the White House, and I told **him**, ‘Yes!’” The two different versions you tell are totally

different, but both are true. How can the second account be truthful? Because “he who acts through another is deemed in law to do it himself”²²—a legal principle (known as the “law of agency”)²³ that billions of people around the world have understood and accepted for millennia.²⁴

Though some may not like it, and others (who continually cry “Bible contradiction”) may “not have it,”²⁵ the fact is, the Bible writers **frequently** (and logically) employed this widely practiced and accepted legal principle of proxy in their penning of Scripture. Before turning our attention back to the centurion’s interaction with Jesus, consider a few (of the many) examples of the “law of agency” in Scripture.

- Moses wrote about Joseph, who was second in command of all of Egypt (Genesis 41:37-44), repeatedly doing things that he undoubtedly **ordered** to be done (and not literally done by him). The text says that **Joseph “gathered...and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting”** (Genesis 41:48-49). Later, “**Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians”** (Genesis 41:56). “**Joseph”** also “**gathered up all the money** that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and **Joseph brought the money** into Pharaoh’s house” (Genesis 47:14). What’s more, “**Joseph gave**” and “**fed**” the Egyptians “**with bread** in exchange for all their livestock” (Genesis 47:17).

Most everyone easily and rightly understands that all these statements are made in light of **Joseph’s authority**

and **not** of him personally doing each and every one of these individual tasks (on behalf of hundreds of thousands, or perhaps millions of people). It truthfully can be said that what Joseph authorized and commanded, “he did.” Like all sorts of leaders in the past and present, Joseph was viewed as ultimately responsible for Egypt’s success or failure (at least during seven years of plenty and seven years of famine—Genesis 41:1-47:26). All those actions done **on Joseph’s behalf** were done (in a very real sense) “**by Joseph.**”

- At one point, Joseph reminded his brothers that they had sold him “**into Egypt**” (Genesis 45:4), when technically they sold him to the **Midianites**, who in turn sold him into Egypt (Genesis 37:36). Nearly 2,000 years later, Stephen used Joseph’s same language to describe Joseph being sold by his brothers “into Egypt” (Acts 7:9). Truly, this type of speech was used, understood, and perfectly acceptable among Israel **for 2,000 years!**
- The Gospel writers frequently use such acceptable legal language throughout their accounts of the life of Christ. For example, John wrote that “the Pharisees had heard that **Jesus** made and baptized more disciples than John (though,” John explains, “**Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples**)” (John 4:1-2).
- Prior to Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem during the final week of His life, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all indicate that He instructed **two of His disciples**, saying, “Go...find a colt...and bring it here” (Luke 19:30; Matthew 21:2; Mark 11:2). The **disciples** then “brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it” (Mark 11:7; cf. Matthew 21:7; Luke 19:35). Yet, when John briefly addresses these same events, he simply notes, “**Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it**” (12:14). Did Jesus personally obtain

the donkey? No. However, what Jesus commanded, “He did” (in the “law-of-agency” sense).

- One of the most well-known examples of this type of language is found in Acts 1:18. Luke mentions that **Judas** “purchased a field with the wages of iniquity,” yet literally it was the **chief priests** who used the deceased Judas’s 30 pieces of silver, which he had returned to them, to buy the potter’s field (Matthew 27:3-10).

The accounts of Jesus speaking “to the centurion” are easily harmonized by considering that (1) “he who acts through another is deemed in law to do it himself”; and (2) the Bible writers frequently used this language throughout Scripture. Did the humble centurion²⁶ plead with Jesus via the Jewish elders (in Luke 7:3) and through his friends (in Luke 7:6)? Yes. Did Jesus respond to the centurion through these same men? It certainly seems so (Matthew 8:7; Luke 7:3-9). **Might it also be the case** that at some point, the centurion personally came to where Jesus and the crowd were located in Capernaum, but not necessarily in Jesus’ immediate presence? Yes. And, though not demanded, could it be that Jesus also momentarily bypassed the proxy and spoke directly to the centurion? Indeed, such is possible.

Whereas Matthew gives a more summarized view of the interaction between Jesus and the centurion, omitting the technical details regarding those who were sent on the centurion’s behalf (Luke 7:3-8), Luke includes those details. On the other hand, whereas Matthew includes more of Jesus’ hard-hitting speech on this occasion (Matthew 8:10-13), Luke gives a very abbreviated form (Luke 7:9). As expected from two honest, independent writers, we have two different (but harmonious!) accounts.

TAKE IT, OR LEAVE IT?

Matthew 10:9-10; Mark 6:8-9; Luke 9:3

One of the more difficult alleged Bible contradictions that I was asked to “tackle” in this volume was presented to me several years ago by the mother of a dear friend. She asked, “When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles on what is commonly called the ‘limited commission,’ did He instruct them to take staffs or not?” Her question was the result of studying the three following parallel passages in the synoptic gospels. (The difficult portions are in bold type.)

“**Provide neither** gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, **nor staffs** [literally, “**a staff**”]; for a worker is worthy of his food” (Matthew 10:9-10).

“He commanded them to **take nothing** for the journey **except a staff**—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts—but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics” (Mark 6:8-9).

“And He said to them, “**Take nothing** for the journey, **neither staffs** [literally, “**a staff**”] nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece” (Luke 9:3).

A cursory reading of the above passages admittedly is somewhat confusing. Matthew and Luke seem to agree that Jesus prohibited the disciples from taking a staff on their journeys, while Mark appears to give them permission to take one. Furthermore, although Luke does not record Jesus’ command regarding sandals, some have concluded that Matthew and Mark also contradict each other on this point. To use the words of one skeptic, “In

Matthew's gospel, Jesus tells his disciples to **go barefoot** and **take no staff**. But the Jesus in Mark's gospel (6:8-9) tells them to **wear sandals** and **carry a staff**." Actually then, the question at hand is about staffs and sandals, even though Luke mentioned only staffs.

The differences between Matthew and Mark are explained easily when one acknowledges that the writers used different Greek verbs to express different meanings. The word "provide" (NKJV) in Matthew 10:9 is translated from the Greek *ktesesthe*, which is derived from *ktaomai*. According to Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, in their *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, this verb means "to gain possession of, procure for oneself, acquire, get."²⁷ Based upon these definitions, the New American Standard Version used the English verb "acquire" in Matthew 10:9 ("Do not acquire..."), instead of "provide" (as in the NKJV). Thus, according to Matthew, Jesus is saying (in essence): "Go as you are and do not take the time to go procure for yourself anything in addition to what you already have." As Mark indicated, the apostles were to "take" (*airo*) what they had, and go. The apostles were not to waste precious time gathering supplies (extra apparel, staffs, shoes, etc.) or making preparations for their trip, but instead were instructed to trust in God's providence for additional needs. Jesus did not mean for the apostles to discard the staffs and sandals they already had; rather, they were not to go and acquire more.

To illustrate this point using a modern-day scenario, consider the CEO who came to his personnel director near the end of the day, and said that he needed her to fly to Los Angeles on a business trip immediately. If he told the director not to acquire anything for this urgent trip,

including clothes, shoes, or make-up, she would know that he meant not to take anything extra. Obviously the CEO did not intend for the woman to take off her shoes, clothes, and the make-up she already was wearing in order to make the trip. Furthermore, if her boss came back five minutes later (to ensure that she understood his instructions clearly) and stated, “Hurry. The plane is leaving in one hour. Don’t take anything with you except what you’re wearing,” the personnel director would conclude the same thing she did the first time—do not take anything extra. The CEO said the same thing using two different phrases. Similarly, the wording in Matthew and Mark represents two different ways of saying virtually the same thing.

Most apologists and biblical commentators discontinue their discussion of these parallel passages at this point. They explain the difference between Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts of Jesus sending out the Twelve, but they omit Luke’s account. In order to answer the skeptic’s criticism adequately, however, Luke’s account must be included in this discussion. Otherwise, one still is left with an unanswered alleged contradiction. The differences surrounding Luke’s and Mark’s accounts are explainable, but it takes effort on the part of the reader to comprehend them. [The following facts must be read carefully in order to understand the legitimate differences in these accounts.]

As is obvious from a comparison of the verses in Matthew and Luke, they are recording the same truth—that the apostles were not to spend valuable time gathering extra staffs—but they are using different words to do so.

“**Provide** (Greek *ктаομι*) **neither** gold nor silver... **nor staffs**” (Matthew 10:9-10).

“**Take** (Greek *airo*) **nothing** for the journey, **neither staffs**” (Luke 9:3).

Luke did not use *ктаομι* in his account because he nearly always used *ктаομι* in a different sense than Matthew did. In Matthew’s account, the word *ктаομαι* is used to mean “provide” or “acquire,” whereas in the books of Luke and Acts, Luke used this word to mean “purchase, buy, or earn.” Notice the following examples of how Luke used this word.

“I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I **get**” (*ктаομαι*) [Luke 18:12, NASB].

“Now this man **purchased** (*ктаομαι*) a field with the wages of iniquity” (Acts 1:18).

“Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be **purchased** (*ктаομαι*) with money!” (Acts 8:20).

“The commander answered, ‘With a large sum I **obtained** (*ктаομαι*) this citizenship’” (Acts 22:28).

[Luke 21:19 is the only place where one could argue that Luke may have used *ктаομαι* to mean something other than “purchase, buy, or earn.” But, even in this verse a transactional notion is present²⁸].

When Luke, the beloved physician (Colossians 4:14), used the word *ктаομαι*, he meant something different than when Matthew, the tax collector, used the same word. Whereas Luke used *ктаομαι* to refer to purchasing or buying something, Matthew used the Greek verb *αγοραζο* (cf. Matthew 14:15; 25:9-10; 27:6-7). Matthew used *κταομαι* only in the sense of acquiring something (not purchasing

something). As such, it would make absolutely no sense for Luke to use *ptaomai* in his account of Jesus sending out the apostles (9:3). If he did, then he would have Jesus forbidding the apostles to “purchase” or “buy” money [“**Buy** nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money....”]. Thus, Luke used the more general Greek verb (*airo*) in order to convey the same idea that Matthew did when using the Greek verb *ptaomai*.

Just as *ptaomai* did not mean the same for Luke and Matthew, the Greek word *airo* (translated “take” in both Mark 6:8 and Luke 9:3) often did not mean the same for Luke and Mark.²⁹ [Understanding this simple fact eliminates the “contradiction” completely, for unless the skeptic can be certain that Mark and Luke were using the word in the same sense, he cannot prove that the accounts contradict each other.] Mark consistently used *airo* in other passages throughout his gospel to mean simply “take” or “pick up and carry” (2:9; 6:29; 11:23; 13:16). That Luke (in 9:3) did not mean the same sense of *airo* as Mark did (in 6:8) is suggested by the fact that in Luke 19:21-22, he used this same verb to mean “acquire.” Another piece of comparative data between Mark and Luke is that when Mark recorded Jesus informing His listeners that to be His disciple, one had to “take up his cross” (Mark 8:34), he used the word *airo*. Luke, on the other hand, used the Greek word *bastazo* (14:27).³⁰

Without going any farther with these language comparisons, one simply must understand that the Greek language (like most languages) is flexible enough so that sometimes two writers can use the same word to mean

different things, and sometimes they can use different words to mean the same thing (as indicated by the following chart,* which serves as a summary of the aforementioned comparisons and contrasts).

	<i>ктаομαι</i>	<i>αγοραζο</i>	<i>αιρο</i>	<i>βασταζο</i>
Matthew	to acquire	to purchase, buy		
Mark			to take, pick up and carry	
Luke	to purchase, buy		to acquire	to take, pick up and carry

*NOTE: Only the definitions that pertain to the particular verses in question are shown.

In case you think such “language leeway” in the Greek sounds absurd, remember that this flexibility appears frequently in the English language. Consider two basketball coaches who are commenting on a player. One says, “He is bad;” the other says, “He is good.” The coaches may be using two different words to mean the same thing. The truth is, in some contexts the words “bad” and “good” are opposites; in other situations they are synonymous.

Although many have been misled about the differences regarding Jesus’ instructions when sending out His apostles on the limited commission, the truth is that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were all saying the same thing: “Hurry up and get moving!”

DEAD, OR DYING?

Matthew 9:18; Mark 5:23; Luke 8:42

After healing the men who were possessed with demons on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:28-34), Jesus passed over to the other

side and “came to his own city” (Matthew 9:1). Soon thereafter, a man by the name of Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue, fell at Jesus’ feet and worshiped Him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live” (Matthew 9:18). Normally, we would continue telling this amazing story about how Jesus raised the 12-year-old girl from the dead. However, the purpose here is to answer the skeptics who claim that a contradiction exists between Matthew’s account of this story and the accounts recorded by Mark and Luke. Whereas Matthew records Jairus telling Jesus, “My daughter **has just died**” (Matthew 9:18), the other two accounts indicate that his daughter was “**at the point of death**” (Mark 5:23)—that “she **was dying**” (Luke 8:42). What are we to make of this difference?

Various Greek scholars and commentators have stated that there is not as much difference between Matthew’s *arti eteleutesen* (“has just died;” cf. Hebrews 11:22) and *eschatos echei* (“is dying” NIV) in Mark 5:23 as some would have us to think. According to Craig Blomberg, *arti* (“even now” or “just”) has some connotations that suggest not always a **present** reality, but an **inevitable** reality (cf. Matthew 3:15; 23:39; 1 Corinthians 4:13). Therefore, Blomberg concluded that it is possible Matthew was relating the inevitability and certainty of Jairus’ daughter dying, rather than making a statement about her current condition.³¹ Adam Clarke mentioned in his commentary on Matthew that chapter 9 verse 18 could be legitimately translated, “my daughter was just now dying.”³² Albert Barnes agreed, saying: “The Greek word, rendered ‘is even now dead,’ does not of

necessity mean, as our translation would express, that she had actually expired, but only that she was ‘dying’ or about to die.... The passage [Matthew 9:18–EL] may be expressed thus: ‘My daughter was so sick that she must be by this time dead.’”³³ In short, this alleged contradiction **may** be a simple misunderstanding of what Matthew actually wrote about the dying child.

Perhaps a better explanation to this question is that Jairus uttered both statements: Mark and Luke mention her severe sickness, while Matthew speaks of her death. As in so many other places, each writer reported only a part of what occurred and what was said. Does Matthew’s omission of the coming of the messengers who told Jairus that his daughter had just died mean that his account contradicts the others (Mark 5:35; Luke 8:49)? Certainly not. Nor do his additional details. R.C. Trench, in his classic work on the miracles of Jesus, made the following observation concerning the differences in the gospel writers’ accounts of what was said when Jairus approached Jesus:

When the father left the child, she was at her last gasp; and he knew not whether to regard her now as dead or alive; and, yet having not received certain knowledge of her death, he was perplexed whether to speak of her as departed or not, **expressing himself one moment in one language, and at the next in another.** Strange that a circumstance like this, so drawn from life, so testifying of the things recorded, should be urged by some as a contradiction.³⁴

Strange indeed!

WHO MADE THE REQUEST TO SIT AT JESUS' SIDE?

Matthew 20:20; Mark 10:35

According to Matthew 20:20, “**the mother** of Zebedee’s sons” requested that her two sons (James and John) sit at Jesus’ side in His kingdom. Mark, on the other hand, indicates that “**James and John**...came to Him [Jesus], saying, ‘Teacher, we want You to do for **us** whatever **we** ask.... Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory” (10:35,37). Some believe that Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts are inconsistent. Since Mark wrote that James and John made the request, while Matthew mentioned that it was their mother, allegedly at least one of the gospel writers was mistaken.

Consider the following modern-day analogy. The President of the United States takes two well-known newspaper reporters with him on the campaign trail as he seeks re-election. Over a period of several days, the reporters carefully record the questions and answers that many different people ask the President. Later, the *New York Times* reporter writes about a mother who asked the President about the out-of-control national debt and how it would affect her sons. The reporter from the *Chicago Tribune* writes about how this woman’s two sons questioned the President about the massive amount of debt that the country has accumulated. Which reporter is correct? The fact is, they both are. The *New York Times* reporter chose only to mention the mother because he wrote a story that focused on questions that parents had asked the President. The

writer from the *Chicago Tribune*, on the other hand, highlighted questions that were on the minds of young people. The articles were different, but both were truthful because both the mother and her sons had asked the President the same question.

Similarly, both Zebedee's wife and his sons made a request to Jesus. It could be that all three made the request at the same time. Or, it might be that the mother made the request first, followed by her sons. Regardless, no one can prove that what Matthew and Mark wrote was contradictory. Different? Yes, but that is to be expected from different writers who wrote for different reasons to different people.

WAS THE ROBE PLACED ON JESUS SCARLET OR PURPLE?

Matthew 27:27-28; Mark 15:16-17; John 19:1-2

After being flogged with a dreadful Roman scourge, Jesus was taken by Pilate's soldiers into the governor's headquarters where the whole garrison gathered around Him. It was here that the soldiers placed a crown of thorns on His head, a reed in His hand, and a robe on His body. But what color was the robe that was placed on Jesus' marred body? Whereas Matthew said that the soldiers "put a **scarlet** robe" on Jesus (27:27-28), Mark and John noted that the robe was "purple" (Mark 15:16-17; John 19:1-2).³⁵ Does a valid answer exist for the differences in the gospel narratives concerning the robe placed upon Jesus after His scourging?

All would agree that we oftentimes see colors a little differently. What one person calls blue, someone else

may (in a more specific fashion) call navy blue. A die-hard football fan may refer to his team's color as dark red, whereas someone else who sees the team's faded uniforms for the first time at the end of a grueling season may conclude that the team's color is more maroon. While coloring pictures for their parents, one child may color a yellow-orange Sun, while the other draws a Sun that is bright yellow. Surely no one would accuse these individuals of lying or being deceitful because one was more specific than another. Likewise, skeptics have no solid ground on which to stand when they disregard common sense and create biblical contradictions that do not exist. The simple fact is, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote from different perspectives; they did not participate in collusion. The same way that individuals today look at colors and see different tones, shades, and tints, the gospel writers saw the activities surrounding the life of Jesus from different angles.

The garment placed upon Jesus after His brutal scourging likely was similar to faded football uniforms, but in His case we read of "a scarlet robe...faded to resemble purple."³⁶ [It is difficult to imagine Pilate arraying Jesus' bloody body with a new robe. More likely it was one that had been worn and cast off as worthless.] Furthermore, according to A.T. Robertson, there were various shades of purple and scarlet in the first century, and it was not easy to distinguish the colors or tints.³⁷ In fact, the ancients (especially the Romans) used the term purple when speaking of various shades of red. Consequently, these different colors sometimes would be called by the same name.

As one can see, there is no discrepancy in the gospel narratives concerning the color of the robe Jesus wore. Just like others of their day, the gospel writers simply used the terms scarlet and purple interchangeably.

ENDNOTES

Chapter 1

1. Dennis McKinsey (1995), *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus), p. 71.
2. Steve Wells (2021), *The Skeptic's Annotated Bible*, www.skepticsannotatedbible.com/intro.html.
3. Dan Barker (2008), *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists* (Berkeley, CA: Ulysses), p. 222.
4. See Wells (2021), www.skepticsannotatedbible.com/contra/reviled.html.
5. See Donald Morgan (2021), "Bible Inconsistencies - Bible Contradictions?" https://infidels.org/library/modern/donald_morgan/contradictions.html. See also Steve Wells (2021), <http://www.skepticsannotatedbible.com/contra/judge.html>.
6. See Dennis McKinsey (2000), *Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus), p. 30.
7. Aristotle (n.d.), *Metaphysics*: Book 4, trans. W.D. Ross, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.4.iv.html>, 4:3.

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Cf. Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5.
11. Genesis 1:20; Jeremiah 4:25; Matthew 6:26, ASV.
12. Genesis 1:14-15; Psalm 19:4,6; Isaiah 13:10.
13. Psalm 2:4; Revelation 21:18-23; John 14:1-3; Hebrews 9:24.
14. See Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27,29,34.
15. For the sake of argument, consider for a moment that the skeptic is right, and that Elijah's spirit did not go to Paradise, but was taken to dwell in the very presence of God. Could Jesus still have made the statement He did, and yet not be inaccurate? I believe so. Notice again the response to Nicodemus' question, "How can these things be?" Jesus said: "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man" (John 3:12-13). It may be that Jesus meant nothing more than that no one has ever gone up to heaven "by his own act" or "on his own terms" [see E.W. Bullinger (1898), *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1968 reprint), pp. 281-282]. Elijah had been taken by God, which is different than freely ascending up into heaven on one's own terms. Furthermore, Jesus' words, "No one has ascended to heaven," also could have meant that no one has ever gone up into heaven to then return and speak firsthand about what he saw, and to spread the same saving message that Jesus preached. Jesus was emphasizing to Nicodemus how no one on Earth at that time was revealing such spiritual truths as Christ was, because no one ever had ascended to heaven to then return and talk about what he had seen and learned. Such seems to have been the main point Jesus was making in John 3:13. No one on Earth had seen what Jesus had seen, and thus could not teach what He taught.

Consider also that Nicodemus, being "a man of the Pharisees" (John 3:1), and thus one who would have been very well acquainted with the details of the Old Testament, did not respond to Jesus by saying, "Wait a minute, Rabbi. What about Elijah?"

Isn't it written in the prophets that he ascended to heaven?" Surely, had Jesus contradicted something in the Old Testament, it would have been brought to His attention, especially by a Pharisee. Yet, the apostle John never records such a statement.

Truly, the skeptic's accusation that Jesus either lied or was mistaken regarding his comment to Nicodemus about no one having ascended to heaven, is unsubstantiated.

16. McKinsey (2000), p. 30. Cf. Morgan (2003).
17. James Burton Coffman (1974), *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press), p. 375, emp. in orig.
18. Flavius Josephus (1987), *The Wars of the Jews*, in *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whitson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 4:5:4.
19. "Biblical Contradictions" (2013), *EvilBible.com*, <http://www.evilibible.com/Biblical%20Contradictions.htm>.
20. "Whale Explodes in Taiwanese City" (2004), *BBC News*, January 29, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3437455.stm>.
21. Wayne Jackson (2005), *The Acts of the Apostles* (Stockton, CA: Courier Publications), p. 13.
22. The English term "patriarch" derives from the Greek *patriarches*, which actually is made of two words—*pater*, meaning "father;" and *arches*, meaning "head" or "founder." A patriarch is "the head of a father's house—the founder or ruler of a tribe, family, or clan" ["Patriarch" (1986), *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson)].

Other than Christianity and Judaism, there has been but one other law, through the ages, under which God accepted worship: This was the "patriarchal" system that had continued since commands were first given in Eden. Adam, Eve, and their non-Judean descendants were under some kind of law, for the apostle Paul stated, "where there is no law, neither is there transgression" (Romans 4:15, ASV). For the Gentiles to have been guilty of sin (which we know they were—Romans 3:10,23), they must have transgressed some law. What law was it? It was not the Law of Moses, because they were not amenable to that law (either because it had not

yet been established or because they were not descendants of Abraham). What's more, it was not the Law of Christ, because that Law did not come into effect until the first century A.D. Although there still is much we do not understand about the Patriarchal Law (e.g., what direct revelations they received, what "laws" were passed down from generation to generation, etc.), we can know that the Gentiles were under **a** law (that was not the Law of Moses nor the Law of Christ), because they were guilty of "transgression" (Romans 4:15; 5:13), just as all men are. And if there is transgression, then there must be some law. Man has given this law a name—patriarchy.

23. For more on this subject, see *The Anvil Rings* volume 2, chapter 8.
24. "Agency" (2010), Cornell University Law School, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/agency>.
25. R.C.H. Lenski (1961), *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg), p. 920.
26. See A.T. Robertson (1930), *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman), pp. 117-118.

Chapter 2

1. Bart Ehrman (2009), *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them)* (New York: HarperOne), pp. 9-10.
2. I received an e-mail a few years ago in which the inquirer wanted help responding to an editorial in his local newspaper in which it was alleged, "In Genesis 1, God creates light and green plants and trees before he creates the sun and other stars, the source of all light and heat, without which life is not possible."
3. See, for example, Clem Thurman (2006), "How Was Light Before the Sun?" *Gospel Minutes*, September 8, p. 3.
4. *Ibid.*, emp. added.
5. Cf. Dennis McKinsey (2000), *Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus), p. 84.

6. See Eric Lyons and A.P. Staff (2002), "In the 'Image and Likeness of God,'" *Reason & Revelation*, 22:17-32, March and April.
7. Various authors have documented how it would be quite possible for Adam to have named large numbers of animals in a very short period of time. For more information, see Henry M. Morris (1976), *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), pp. 96-98.
8. Herbert C. Leupold (1942), *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 130, emp. added.
9. Victor P. Hamilton (1990), *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 176.
10. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (1996), *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft), new updated edition, emp. added.
11. Kenneth Kitchen (1966), *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Inter-Varsity Press), p. 117.
12. Norman L. Geisler and Thomas A. Howe (1992), *When Critics Ask* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books), p. 35.
13. Gleason L. Archer (1982), *An Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), pp. 68-69.
14. Hamilton, p. 176, emp. added.
15. U. Cassuto (1961), *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes), p. 129, emp. added.
16. Albert Barnes (1997), *Notes on the Old and New Testaments* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
17. Robert Jamieson, et al. (1997), *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Bible Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
18. George Cansdale (1996), "Animals of the Bible," *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), third edition, p. 38.
19. Hamilton, p. 172.
20. Garry K. Brantley (1995), "Questions & Answers," *Reason & Revelation*, 15[3]:24, March.

21. Cf. Genesis 18:16-33; Jonah 3:1-10.
22. Genesis 3:21.
23. Brantley.

Chapter 3

1. William Henry Green (1978), *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 47. See also Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III (1994), *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 40.
2. Josh McDowell (1999), *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, TN: Nelson), pp. 404-406.
3. Henry M. Morris (1976), *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 23; McDowell (1999), p. 406.
4. Andrew Brown (1999), *The Darwin Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster), p. 167.
5. Norman Gottwald (1959), *A Light to the Nations* (New York: Harper and Row), p. 103, emp. added.
6. Rolf Rendtorff (1998), "What We Miss by Taking the Bible Apart," *Bible Review*, 14[1]:44, February, emp. added.
7. Dennis McKinsey (1995), *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus), p. 366, emp. added.
8. Julius Wellhausen (1885), *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black), translated by Black and Menzies, p. 393, emp. added.
9. Hermann Schultz (1898), *Old Testament Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), translated from the fourth edition by H.A. Patterson, pp. 25-26, emp. added.
10. T.K. Cheyne (1899), *Encyclopedia Biblica* (London: A & C Black), 2:2055.
11. Wayne Jackson (1982), *Biblical Studies in the Light of Archaeology* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press), p. 32, emp. added.

12. D.J. Wiseman (1974), *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 705.
13. Charles F. Pfeiffer (1966), *The Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 33.
14. Joseph P. Free and Howard F. Vos (1992), *Archaeology and Bible History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), pp. 103,55, emp. added.
15. W.F. Albright (1938), "Archaeology Confronts Biblical Criticism," *The American Scholar*, 7:186, parenthetical comment in orig.
16. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman (2001), *The Bible Unearthed* (New York: Free Press), p. 14.
17. Stephen Van Eck (1999), "The Pentateuch: Not Wholly Moses or Even Partially," *Skeptical Review*, 10:2, September/October.
18. Paul N. Tobin (2000), "Mythological Elements in the Story of Abraham and the Patriachal [sic] Narratives," *The Rejection of Pascal's Wager*.
19. Dennis McKinsey (2000), *Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus), p. 521.
20. Tobin.
21. Ibid.
22. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (1996), *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft), new updated edition.
23. Robert Jamieson, et al. (1997), *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Bible Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
24. Cheyne, 1:634.
25. Gottwald, p. 104.
26. Finkelstein and Silberman, p. 37, emp. added.
27. Tobin.
28. Randall W. Younker (2000), "The Bible and Archaeology," *The Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship*.
29. Joseph P. Free (1944), "Abraham's Camels," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 3:189-190, July.

30. The dates given for the Egyptian dynasties are from Peter A. Clayton (2001), *Chronicle of the Pharaohs* (London: Thames & Hudson), pp. 14-68.
31. K.A. Kitchen (1980), *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale), 1:228.
32. Free (1944), pp. 189-190.
33. K.A. Kitchen (1966), *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: InterVarsity Press), p. 79.
34. Younker (2000), parenthetical comment in orig.
35. Free (1944), p. 191, emp. added.
36. Randall W. Younker (1997), "Late Bronze Age Camel Petroglyphs in the Wadi Nasib, Sinai," *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin*, 42:52.
37. See "Animal Kingdom" (1988), *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft), orig. published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois.
38. And the absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence.
39. McKinsey (1995), p. 363, emp. in orig.
40. Cf. Gottwald (1959), p. 104; McKinsey (1995), pp. 361-362.
41. Keil and Delitzsch (1996).
42. Jamieson, et al. (1997).
43. Gottwald (1959), p. 104, emp. added.
44. H.T. Frank (1964), *An Archaeological Companion to the Bible* (London: SCM Press), p. 323.
45. Millar Burrows (1941), *What Mean These Stones?* (New Haven, CT: American Schools of Oriental Research), p. 277.
46. Larry Richards (1993), *735 Baffling Bible Questions Answered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell), p. 40.
47. See Merrill Unger (1954), *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 91; Gleason Archer (1964), *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, IL: Moody), p.

- 266; R.K. Harrison (1963), *The Archaeology of the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row), p. 32.
48. Kitchen (1966), p. 80n.
 49. Gleason Archer (1970), "Old Testament History and Recent Archaeology from Abraham to Moses," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 127:18, January.
 50. J.W. McGarvey (1902), *The Authorship of the Book of Deuteronomy* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing), p. 199.
 51. Josh McDowell (1975), *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ), pp. 93-94.
 52. See D.R. Dungan (1888), *Hermeneutics* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Company), pp. 273-275.
 53. M.R. DeHaan (1978), *Genesis and Evolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 41.

Chapter 4

1. For more information on alleged discrepancies pertaining to chronology, see *The Anvil Rings* volume 2, chapter 5.
2. Victor P. Hamilton (1995), *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 40, bracketed items added.
3. John T. Willis (1984), *Genesis* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press), orig. published by Sweet Publishing Company of Austin, Texas, p. 266.
4. Flavius Josephus (1987 edition), *Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 1:11:4.
5. See Robert Jamieson, et al. (1997), *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Bible Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
6. Josephus, 14:3:1; 15:2:5.
7. R.C.H. Lenski (1961), *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg), p. 270.
8. Ibid.

9. Albert Barnes (1956), *Notes on the Old and New Testaments: Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 123, emp. added.
10. Steven D. Mathewson (1989), "An Exegetical Study of Genesis 38," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 146:383, October.
11. Ibid.
12. Umberto Cassuto (1973), *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press), orig. published in 1929, 1:34.
13. Ibid, 1:35.
14. Albert Barnes (1997), *Notes on the Old and New Testaments* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
15. Willis, p. 433.
16. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (1996), *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft), new updated edition.
17. See Jamieson, et al., emp. added.
18. Gleason L. Archer (1982), *An Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), p. 169, emp. added.
19. Ibid.
20. Josephus, 6.1.4.
21. "Bethshemesh" (1998), *Fausset's Bible Dictionary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
22. See Larry Richards (1993), *735 Baffling Bible Questions Answered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell), p. 106; see also "Genealogy," (1986), *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft), orig. published by Thomas Nelson Publishers of Nashville, Tennessee.
23. See John W. Haley (1951 reprint), *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate), p. 382.
24. See Barnes (1997).
25. Adam Clarke (1996), *Adam Clarke's Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
26. Some such as Keil and Delitzsch believe the difference between 1 Kings 7:26 and 2 Chronicles 4:5 is the result of a **copyist**,

while attempting to ensure a “carbon copy” of the manuscript, making an error. [See chapter seven of this book for more information on copyists’ errors.]. Keil and Delitzsch tend to believe that the number 3,000 given in 2 Chronicles 4:5 has arisen from the confusion of the letter *gimel* (Hebrew transliterated letter-number for “3”) with *beth* (Hebrew transliterated letter-number for “2”). By a comparison of the two Hebrew letters, it is easy to see that their shape is quite similar. Even a tiny smudge from excessive wear on a scroll-column or a slightly damaged manuscript could have resulted in making the *gimel* look like a *beth*. With such an adjustment, the statements in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles are harmonized easily. However, as already noted, it may very well be that this is not a copyist’s error at all.

27. See “Cock” (1998), *Fausset’s Bible Dictionary* (Electronic Database: BibleSoft).
28. See “Cock-crowing,” John McClintock and James Strong (1968), *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 2:398.
29. J.W. McGarvey (1875), *Commentary on Matthew and Mark* (Delight AR: Gospel Light), p. 355.
30. Archer (1982), p. 401; Norman L. Geisler and Thomas A. Howe (1992), *When Critics Ask* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books), pp. 458-459.
31. See Jamieson, et al.
32. Though Moses would later write about what happened “in the day of the plague” (Numbers 25:18; cf. Genesis 2:17; 1 Kings 2:37,42), he did not use a numerical adjective to delineate clearly a set period of one day as Paul did. Thus, the difference in the two numbers can easily (and logically) be resolved by taking into account that Paul’s number included what happened within a literal 24-hour period, while Moses’ number included everyone who died “when the plague came” (Numbers 25:18, NIV), however long it lasted.
33. Emp. added.
34. Emp. added.

35. Peter H. Davids, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., F.F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Brauch (1996), *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), p. 598, emp. added.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., pp. 598-599, parenthetical comments in orig., emp. added.
38. And does so quite well in many areas.
39. Including Walter Kaiser, Manfred Brauch, and F.F. Bruce.
40. Adam Clarke (1996), *Adam Clarke's Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
41. Gordon D. Fee (1987), *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 729, emp. added.
42. Steve Wells (2001), *The Skeptic's Annotated Bible*, <http://www.skepticsannotatedbible.com/1cor/index.html>, emp. added.
43. We defined this word earlier in this chapter as “the assignment of something, such as an event or name, to a time that precedes it.”

Chapter 5

1. Steve Wells (2013), *The Skeptics Annotated Bible* (SAB Books), p. 1614. See also pp. 548,642.
2. “1001 Contradictions & Discrepancies in the Christians Bible” (2014), #250, <http://www.1001biblecontradictions.com/I3d%20-%20HOJ%20%5B234-258%5D.html>.
3. Dennis McKinsey (1983), “Issue No. 5,” *Biblical Errancy*, May, p. 29.
4. John Haley (1977 reprint), *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 376.
5. E.M. Zerr (1954), *Bible Commentary* (Bowling Green, KY: Guardian of Truth Publications), pp. 278-279, emp. in orig.
6. H. Leo Boles (1940), *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Luke* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate), p. 134.

7. *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (1985), Electronic Database: BibleSoft.
8. Dennis McKinsey (2000), *Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus), p. 133.
9. Richard Dawkins (2006), *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin), p. 97.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 93, emp. in orig.
13. Norman L. Geisler and Thomas A. Howe (1992), *When Critics Ask* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books), p. 353.
14. A.T. Robertson (1930), *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman), 1:163.
15. Steve Wells (2001), *The Skeptic's Annotated Bible*, www.skepticsannotatedbible.com.
16. Charles F. Pfeiffer (1979), *Baker's Bible Atlas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 197.
17. Robertson, 1930, 1:203.
18. Leon Morris (1995), *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), revised edition, p. 665.
19. J.W. McGarvey (no date), *The Fourfold Gospel* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard), p. 696.
20. McKinsey, 2000, p. 569.
21. Tony Kuphaldt (2002), "The Word of the Lord," *The Secular Web*, www.infidels.org/library/modern/tony_kuphaldt/word.html.

Chapter 6

1. Manuscripts of the New Testament known as uncials were those penned in large, capital Greek letters.

2. These important codices (manuscripts in book form, rather than in scroll form) are often referred to as “the big three” because of their old age (dating back to the fourth and fifth centuries A.D.) and their volume of material. They “are of inestimable worth as witnesses to the New Testament books...and **all three have become known since the translation of the King James Bible**” [Neil R. Lightfoot (1999), *How We Got the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), second edition, p. 45, emp. added].
3. A.T. Robertson (1930), *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 3:188, emp. added.
4. Wayne Jackson (2005), *The Acts of the Apostles: From Jerusalem to Rome* (Stockton, CA: Christian Courier), p. 156.
5. See Gleason L. Archer (1982), *An Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), p. 226.
6. Edwin R. Thiele (1951), *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 59.
7. Robert Jamieson, et al. (1997), *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Bible Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
8. Archer, p. 225.
9. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (1985), (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
10. Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III (1994), *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), p. 171.
11. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (1996), *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft), new updated edition.
12. Adam Clarke (1996), *Adam Clarke’s Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
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16. Ibid.
17. Earl Kalland (1992), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 3:140.
18. Some think that Nehemiah 13:1,25,27 contradicts this explanation of Ruth and Deuteronomy 23:3. The social situation in Ezra and Nehemiah's day (approximately 600 years after the time of Ruth), however, was quite different than what is found in the book of Ruth. Many of the Jews who had returned from 70 years of Babylonian captivity had taken for themselves "**pagan**" wives from among the Moabites, Ammonites, etc. (Ezra 9:1-2,14; 10:2,10-18,44; Nehemiah 13:23-30), rather than enter into lawful marriages with Jews or faithful converts to Judaism. The Old Testament prohibitions of marrying foreigners (Exodus 34:15-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-4) applied to **pagan non-converts**, not faithful proselytes.
19. He was the great-great-grandson of Rahab of Jericho, but David was not Jerichoan.
20. Dennis McKinsey (1998), "Commentary," *Biblical Errancy*, November, pp. 1,3. See also Steve Wells (2001), *The Skeptic's Annotated Bible*, <http://www.skepticsannotatedbible.com>.
21. See "Daughter" (1996), *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Electronic Database: BibleSoft).
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23. Wells, emp. added.
24. Note: The "**all**" of Matthew 1:17 ("all the generations" from Abraham to Christ) refers only to those ancestors just previously mentioned by Matthew in 1:1-16.

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26. Barnes.
27. Carson, 8:63.
28. Dennis McKinsey (1995), *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus), p. 46.
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31. Clarke.
32. Regarding "Who Was Abijah's Grandfather?"
33. In fact, as Dave Miller explained, "[T]he Jews had no word to express this concept [of a son-in-law-EL] and so just used 'son'" [Dave Miller (2003), "The Genealogies of Matthew and Luke," <https://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?article=932>].
34. Frederic Godet (1881), *A Commentary on The Gospel of St. Luke* (New York: I.K. Funk), 1:128, www.google.com/books/edition/A_Commentary_on_the_Gospel_of_St_Luke/htQ2AAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1.
35. "The Definite Article 'the' has various endings (e.g., *u* and *n-EL*), which show the function of the word it describes in the sentence" (see "Grammar: The Definite Article," in *Dr. Shirley's Greek Courses*, http://www.drshirley.org/greek/grammar/g_def-art.pdf).
36. Godet, 1:128.
37. *Ibid.*, emp. added.
38. R.C.H. Lenski (1961), *The Interpretation of the St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg), p. 219, emp. in orig.
39. Joel Green noted in his commentary on Luke that "[o]ther appearances of the verb [*nomizo-EL*] 'to think' or 'to assume' [translated 'as was supposed' in Luke 3:23-EL] in Luke-Acts show that Luke has in mind **an assumption, wrongly made, that leads to persons acting as if it were true**" [Joel Green (1997), *The New International Commentary on the New Testament:*

The Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), p. 189, emp. added]. Though obviously **assumed** to be, Jesus was not Joseph's **biological** son.

40. Roper, 1:43, emp. in orig.
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6. For additional information on the existence of God, see <http://www.apologeticspress.org/category/existence-of-god>.
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14. Dan Barker (1992), p. 183; McKinsey, 2000, p. 451.
15. For more information on this, see *The Anvil Rings* volume 3, chapter 7.
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19. Sabbath ix. 3, as quoted in Hoehner, 1974, 131:248-249, bracketed comment in orig.
20. Robert Jamieson, et al. (1997), *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Bible Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft), emp. added.
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22. Ibid.
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10. Or any book for that matter. We best understand rulebooks, math books, biographies, etc. when we read them in their totality. Why would we not read the Bible in this same manner—and even more carefully and thoroughly if it is, in fact, the Word of God?
11. Cf. 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17; cf. also Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18-19.
12. Norman L. Geisler and Thomas A. Howe (1992), *When Critics Ask* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books), p. 194.
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16. John Wesley (n.d.), *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*, <http://bible.crosswalk.com/commentaries/WesleysExplanatoryNotes/wes.cgi?book=1ki&chapter=007>.
17. Kyle Butt and Dan Barker (2009), *Does the God of the Bible Exist?* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).
18. This assertion is found 10 minutes and 55 seconds into Barker's first speech.
19. R. Schippers (1971), "Telos," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 2:62. Cf. Philippians 3:9-11.
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22. From the Latin maxim, "*Qui facit per alium, facit per se.*"
23. See "Agency Law and Legal Definition" (2021), USLegal, <https://definitions.uslegal.com/a/agency/>.
24. If a man hires an assassin to murder the President, both the assassin and the man who hired him would be guilty of murder. In fact, the "man behind the murder" (who didn't actually pull the trigger yet proposed and funded it) would likely be prosecuted to a greater degree and given a more severe sentence upon being found guilty "**of murder.**" Indeed, "he who acts through another is deemed in law to do it himself."
25. That is, they seem unwilling to listen to any possible explanation that potentially absolves the Bible writers of error.
26. Who, as a Roman soldier leading 100 men, would have been accustomed to "doing things" through the soldiers under his command.
27. Frederick William Danker, William Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich, (2000), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 572.

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28. See Glenn Miller (1997), “Well, did Jesus tell them to take a staff or not? Another contradiction?!” <http://christian-thinktank.com/nostaff.html>.
 29. Ibid.
 30. Ibid.
 31. Craig L. Blomberg (1992), *Matthew* (Nashville, TN: Broadman), p. 160.
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 33. Barnes.
 34. Richard C. Trench (1949), *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord* (Grand Rapids: Baker), pp. 107-108, emp. added.
 35. Technically, Mark said “they clothed Him with **purple**” (15:16-17), and John stated that the soldiers put “**a purple robe**” on Him (19:1-2).
 36. *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (1985), Electronic Database: Biblesoft.
 37. A.T. Robertson (1997), *Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).

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*This index specifically highlights only those biblical passages that directly relate to various criticisms of skeptics discussed in this volume.

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The Anvil Rings

VOLUME 1

Of all the challenges to a Christian's faith, surely one of the most troubling in this day and age is skepticism's charge that the Bible is filled with various discrepancies and contradictions. If true, such an accusation (which is occurring with increasing frequency) certainly would serve to negate the inerrancy and inspiration of the Bible. This volume answers numerous questions and allegations raised by skeptics in a thorough and sensible manner.

- How many times did the rooster crow during Peter's triple denial of Jesus?
- Did Jesus rise from the grave "on the third day" or "after three days"?
- Was Terah 70 or 130 when Abraham was born?
- Did God create animals or man first?
- Who was Joseph's father in Jesus' genealogy?
- Are the resurrection narratives contradictory?

It is a simple matter for an unbeliever to hurl a barrage of alleged discrepancies at a believer, but it is not always a simple task for the believer to respond quickly and effectively. The fact is, many of the so-called discrepancies cannot be answered adequately via a "quick wave of the hand." In *The Anvil Rings* series, Eric has answered many of the most frequently used (and often the most difficult) alleged Bible discrepancies. A great reference tool for any person—young or old—who is seeking answers to tough Bible questions.

About the Author

Eric Lyons is a native of Muskogee, Oklahoma, and is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman University, where he earned a B.S. degree with a double major in Bible and history, and an M.Min. Eric has served as a full-time member of the Bible Department at Apologetics Press since 2001. He has authored or co-authored more than 20 books and has recorded numerous Bible videos.



Eric loves to teach and preach about the fundamentals of Christianity and speaks frequently at seminars and Gospel meetings around the country.

ISBN 978-0-932859-49-5



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