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New Testament Contradictions

Paul Carlson

I. THE BIRTH OF JESUS

A. THE GENEALOGIES OF JOSEPH

1. Matthew and Luke disagree

Matthew and Luke give two contradictory genealogies for Joseph (Matthew 1:2-17 and Luke 3:23-38). They cannot even agree on who the father of Joseph was. Church apologists try to eliminate this discrepancy by suggesting that the genealogy in Luke is actually Mary's, even though Luke says explicitly that it is Joseph's genealogy (Luke 3:23). Christians have had problems reconciling the two genealogies since at least the early fourth century. It was then that Eusebius, a "Church Father," wrote in his *The History of the Church*, "each believer has been only too eager to dilate at length on these passages."

2. Why genealogies of Joseph?

Both the genealogies of Matthew and Luke show that Joseph was a direct descendant of King David. But if Joseph is not Jesus' father, then Joseph's genealogies are meaningless as far as Jesus is concerned, and one has to wonder why Matthew and Luke included them in their gospels. The answer, of course, is that the genealogies originally said that Jesus was the son of Joseph and thus Jesus fulfilled the messianic requirement of being a direct descendant of King David.

Long after Matthew and Luke wrote the genealogies the church invented (or more likely borrowed from the mystery religions) the doctrine of the virgin birth. Although the virgin birth could be accommodated by inserting a few words into the genealogies to break the physical link between Joseph and Jesus, those same insertions also broke the physical link between David and Jesus.

The church had now created two major problems: 1) to explain away the existence of two genealogies of

Joseph, now rendered meaningless, and 2) to explain how Jesus was a descendant of David.

The apostle Paul says that Jesus "was born of the seed of David" (Romans 1:3). Here the word "seed" is literally in the Greek "sperma." This same Greek word is translated in other verses as "descendant(s)" or "offspring." The point is that the Messiah had to be a physical descendant of King David through the male line. That Jesus had to be a physical descendant of David means that even if Joseph had legally adopted Jesus (as some apologists have suggested), Jesus would still not qualify as Messiah if he had been born of a virgin - seed from the line of David was required.

Women did not count in reckoning descent for the simple reason that it was then believed that the complete human was present in the man's sperm (the woman's egg being discovered in 1827). The woman's womb was just the soil in which the seed was planted. Just as there was barren soil that could not produce crops, so also the Bible speaks of barren wombs that could not produce children.

This is the reason that although there are many male genealogies in the Bible, there are no female genealogies. This also eliminates the possibility put forward by some apologists that Jesus could be of the "seed of David" through Mary.

3. Why do only Matthew and Luke know of the virgin birth?

Of all the writers of the New Testament, only Matthew and Luke mention the virgin birth. Had something as miraculous as the virgin birth actually occurred, one would expect that Mark and John would have at least mentioned it in their efforts to convince the world that Jesus was who they were claiming him to be.

The apostle Paul never mentions the virgin birth, even though it would have strengthened his arguments in several places. Instead, where Paul does refer to Jesus' birth, he says that Jesus "was born of the seed of David" (Romans 1:3) and was "born of a woman," not a virgin (Galatians 4:4).

4. Why did Matthew include four women in Joseph's genealogy?

Matthew mentions four women in the Joseph's genealogy.

- a. Tamar - disguised herself as a harlot to seduce Judah, her father-in-law (Genesis 38:12-19).
- b. Rahab - was a harlot who lived in the city of Jericho in Canaan (Joshua 2:1).
- c. Ruth - at her mother-in-law Naomi's request, she came secretly to where Boaz was sleeping and spent the night with him. Later Ruth and Boaz were married (Ruth 3:1-14).
- d. Bathsheba - became pregnant by King David while she was still married to Uriah (2 Samuel 11:2-5).

To have women mentioned in a genealogy is very unusual. That all four of the women mentioned are guilty of some sort of sexual impropriety cannot be a coincidence. Why would Matthew mention these, and only these, women? The only reason that makes any sense is that Joseph, rather than the Holy Spirit, impregnated Mary prior to their getting married, and that this was known by others who argued that because of this Jesus could not be the Messiah. By mentioning these women in the genealogy Matthew is in effect saying, "The Messiah, who must be a descendant of King David, will have at least four "loose women" in his genealogy, so what difference does one more make?"

B. THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE

In Matthew, the angel appears to Joseph in a dream and tells him that Mary's child will save his people from their sins. In Luke, the angel tells Mary that her son will be great, he will be called the Son of the Most High and will rule on David's throne forever. A short time later Mary tells Elizabeth that all generations will consider her (Mary) blessed because of the child that will be born to her.

If this were true, Mary and Joseph should have had the highest regard for their son. Instead, we read in Mark 3:20-21 that Jesus' family tried to take custody of him because they thought he had lost his mind. And later, in Mark 6:4-6 Jesus complained that he received no honor among his own relatives and his own household.

C. THE DATE

According to Matthew, Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great (Matthew 2:1). According to Luke, Jesus was born during the first census in Israel, while Quirinius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:2). This is impossible because Herod died in March of 4 BC and the census took place in 6 and 7 AD, about 10 years after Herod's death.

Some Christians try to manipulate the text to mean this was the first census while Quirinius was governor and that the first census of Israel recorded by historians took place later. However, the literal meaning is "this was the first census taken, while Quirinius was governor ..." In any event, Quirinius did not become governor of Syria until well after Herod's death.

D. THE PLACE

Both Matthew and Luke say that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Matthew quotes Micah 5:2 to show that this was in fulfillment of prophecy. Actually, Matthew misquotes Micah (compare Micah 5:2 to Matthew 2:6). Although this misquote is rather insignificant, Matthew's poor understanding of Hebrew will have great significance later in his gospel.

Luke has Mary and Joseph travelling from their home in Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea for the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:4). Matthew, in contradiction to Luke, says that it was only after the birth of Jesus that Mary and Joseph resided in Nazareth, and then only because they were afraid to return to Judea (Matthew 2:21-23).

In order to have Jesus born in Bethlehem, Luke says that everyone had to go to the city of their birth to register for the census. This is absurd, and would have caused a bureaucratic nightmare. The purpose of the Roman census was for taxation, and the Romans were interested in where the people lived and worked, not where they were born (which they could have found out by simply asking rather than causing thousands of people to travel).

E. THE PROPHECIES

Matthew says that the birth of Jesus and the events following it fulfilled several Old Testament prophecies. These prophecies include:

1. The virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14)

This verse is part of a prophecy that Isaiah relates to King Ahaz regarding the fate of the two kings threatening Judah at that time and the fate of Judah itself. In the original Hebrew, the verse says that a "young woman" will give birth, not a "virgin" which is an entirely different Hebrew word. The young woman became a virgin only when the Hebrew word was mistranslated into Greek.

This passage obviously has nothing to do with Jesus (who, if this prophecy did apply to him, should have been named Immanuel instead of Jesus).

2. The "slaughter of the innocents" (Jeremiah 31:15)

Matthew says that Herod, in an attempt to kill the newborn Messiah, had all the male children two years old and under put to death in Bethlehem and its environs, and that this was in fulfillment of prophecy.

This is a pure invention on Matthew's part. Herod was guilty of many monstrous crimes, including the murder of several members of his own family. However, ancient historians such as Josephus, who delighted in listing Herod's crimes, do not mention what would have been Herod's greatest crime by far. It simply didn't happen.

The context of Jeremiah 31:15 makes it clear that the weeping is for the Israelites about to be taken into exile in Babylon, and has nothing to do with slaughtered children hundreds of years later.

3. Called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1)

Matthew has Mary, Joseph and Jesus fleeing to Egypt to escape Herod, and says that the return of Jesus from Egypt was in fulfillment of prophecy (Matthew 2:15). However, Matthew quotes only the second half of Hosea 11:1. The first half of the verse makes it very clear that the verse refers to God calling the Israelites out of Egypt in the exodus led by Moses, and has nothing to do with Jesus.

As further proof that the slaughter of the innocents and the flight into Egypt never happened, one need only compare the Matthew and Luke accounts of what happened between the time of Jesus' birth and the family's arrival in Nazareth. According to Luke, forty days (the purification period) after Jesus was born, his parents brought him to the temple, made the prescribed sacrifice, and returned to Nazareth. Into this same time period Matthew somehow manages to squeeze: the visit of the Magi to Herod, the slaughter of the innocents and the flight into Egypt, the sojourn in Egypt, and the return from Egypt. All of this action must occur in the forty day period because Matthew has the Magi visit Jesus in Bethlehem before the slaughter of the innocents.

F. THE TRUTH BEHIND THE PROPHECIES - MATTHEW'S BIG BLUNDER

Since the prophecies mentioned above do not, in their original context, refer to Jesus, why did Matthew include them in his gospel? There are two possibilities:

1. The church says that the words had a hidden future context as well as the original context, ie, God was keeping very important secrets from His chosen people.
2. Matthew, in his zeal to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, searched the Old Testament for passages (sometimes just phrases) that could be construed as messianic prophecies and then created or modified events in Jesus' life to fulfill those "prophecies."

Fortunately for those who really want to know the truth, Matthew made a colossal blunder later in his gospel which leaves no doubt at all as to which of the above possibilities is true. His blunder involves what is known as Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey (if you believe Mark, Luke or John) or riding on two donkeys (if you believe Matthew). In Matthew 21:1-7, two animals are mentioned in three of the verses, so this cannot be explained away as a copying error. And Matthew has Jesus riding on both animals at the same time, for verse 7 literally says, "on them he sat."

Why does Matthew have Jesus riding on two donkeys at the same time? Because he misread Zechariah 9:9 which reads in part, "mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Anyone familiar with Old Testament Hebrew would know that the word translated "and" in this passage does not indicate another animal but is used in the sense of "even" (which is used in many translations) for emphasis. The Old Testament often uses parallel phrases which refer to the same thing for emphasis, but Matthew was evidently not familiar with this usage. Although the result is rather humorous, it is also very revealing. It demonstrates conclusively that Matthew created events in Jesus' life to fulfill Old Testament prophecies, even if it meant creating an absurd event. Matthew's gospel is full of fulfilled prophecies. Working the way Matthew did, and believing as the church does in "future contexts," any phrase in the Bible could be turned into a fulfilled prophecy!

G. CONCLUSIONS REACHED SO FAR

From looking at just the birth accounts several conclusions can be reached, all of which will be further reinforced by examining other parts of the New Testament:

1. The gospel writers contradict each other.
2. The gospel writers rewrote history when it suited their purposes.
3. The gospels were extensively edited to accommodate the evolving dogma of the church.
4. The gospel writers misused the Old Testament to provide prophecies for Jesus to fulfill.

From the birth accounts alone, it is obvious that in no way can the New Testament be considered "the inerrant Word of God," or even "the Word of God, inerrant regarding matters important to faith and

practice."

II. JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

A. WHAT DID JOHN THE BAPTIST KNOW ABOUT JESUS AND WHEN DID HE KNOW IT?

John's first encounter with Jesus was while both of them were still in their mothers' wombs, at which time John, apparently recognizing his Saviour, leaped for joy (Luke 1:44). Much later, while John is baptizing, he refers to Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world", and "the Son of God" (John 1:29,36). Later still, John is thrown in prison from which he does not return alive. John's definite knowledge of Jesus as the son of God and saviour of the world is explicitly contradicted by Luke 7:18-23 in which the imprisoned John sends two of his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is coming, or do we look for someone else?"

B. WHY DID JOHN BAPTIZE JESUS?

John baptized for repentance (Matthew 3:11). Since Jesus was supposedly without sin, he had nothing to repent of. The fact that he was baptized by John has always been an embarrassment to the church. The gospels offer no explanation for Jesus' baptism, apart from the meaningless explanation given in Matthew 3:14-15 "to fulfill all righteousness." Other passages, which indicate that Jesus did not consider himself sinless, are also an embarrassment to the church (Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19).

Luke, who claims to be chronological (Luke 1:3), tries to give the impression that John did not baptize Jesus. Luke's account of Jesus' baptism occurs after the account of John's imprisonment (Luke 3:20-21).

C. WHY DIDN'T JOHN THE BAPTIST BECOME A FOLLOWER OF JESUS?

If John knew that Jesus was the son of God, why didn't he become a disciple of Jesus? And why didn't all, or even most, of John's disciples become Jesus' disciples? Most of John's disciples remained loyal to him, even after his death, and a sect of his followers persisted for centuries.

The gospel writers were forced to include Jesus' baptism in their gospels so that they could play it down. They could not ignore it because John's followers and other Jews who knew of Jesus' baptism were using the fact of his baptism to challenge the idea that Jesus was the sinless son of God. The gospel writers went to great pains to invent events that showed John as being subordinate to Jesus.

III. THE LAST SUPPER

A. WHEN - BEFORE OR DURING PASSOVER?

In Matthew, Mark and Luke the last supper takes place on the first day of the Passover (Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:12, Luke 22:7). In John's gospel it takes place a day earlier and Jesus is crucified on the first day of the Passover (John 19:14).

B. THE LORD'S SUPPER - INSTITUTED BY JESUS OR PAUL?

In Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper during the Passover meal (in John's gospel the Lord's Supper is not instituted - Jesus was dead by the time of the Passover meal).

In 1 Corinthians 11:23 the apostle Paul writes, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread..." Here Paul claims that he got the instructions for the Lord's Supper directly from Jesus (evidently from one of his many revelations). Paul writes these words about twenty years after Jesus' death, and had the church already been celebrating the Lord's Supper he certainly would have been aware of it and would have had no need to receive it from the Lord. Some apologists try to play games with the text to make it seem like Paul actually received the instructions from the other apostles, but one thing Paul stresses is that what he teaches he receives from no man (Galatians 1:11-12).

The Lord's supper was not invented by Paul, but was borrowed by him from Mithraism, the mystery religion that existed long before Christianity and was Christianity's chief competitor up until the time of Constantine. In Mithraism, the central figure is the mythical Mithras, who died for the sins of mankind and was resurrected. Believers in Mithras were rewarded with eternal life. Part of the Mithraic communion liturgy included the words, "He who will not eat of my body and drink of my blood, so that he will be made one with me and I with him, the same shall not know salvation."

The early Church Fathers Justin Martyr and Tertullian tried to say that Mithraism copied the Lord's Supper from Christianity, but they were forced to say that demons had copied it since only demons could copy an event in advance of its happening! They could not say that the followers of Mithras had copied it - it was a known fact that Mithraism had included the ritual a long time before Christ was born.

Where did Mithraism come from? The ancient historian Plutarch mentioned Mithraism in connection with the pirates of Cilicia in Asia Minor encountering the Roman general Pompey in 67 BC. More recently, in 1989 Mithraic scholar David Ulansey wrote a book, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries*, in which he convincingly shows that Mithraism originated in the city of Tarsus in Cilicia. That this is also the home town of the apostle Paul cannot be a coincidence.

Paul admits that he did not know Jesus during Jesus' lifetime. He also says that his gospel was not taught to him by any man (Galatians 1:11-12). All of Paul's theology is based on his own revelations, or visions. Like dreams, visions or hallucinations do not come from nowhere, but reveal what is already in a

person's subconscious. It is very likely that the source of most of Paul's visions, and therefore most of his theology, is to be found in Mithraism. That we find Jesus at the Last Supper saying more or less the same thing Paul said to the Corinthians many years later is another example of the church modifying the gospels to incorporate the theology of Paul, which eventually won out over the theology of Jesus' original disciples.

C. JUDAS ISCARIOT

It is very unclear in the gospels just what Judas Iscariot's betrayal consisted of, probably because there was absolutely no need for a betrayal. Jesus could have been arrested any number of times without the general populace knowing about it. It would have been simple to keep tabs on his whereabouts. The religious authorities did not need a betrayal - only the gospel writers needed a betrayal, so that a few more "prophecies" could be fulfilled. The whole episode is pure fiction - and, as might be expected, it is riddled with contradictions.

1. The prophecy

Matthew says that Judas' payment and death were prophesied by Jeremiah, and then he quotes Zechariah 11:12-13 as proof!

2. Thirty pieces of silver

According to Matthew 26:15, the chief priests "weighed out thirty pieces of silver" to give to Judas. There are two things wrong with this:

- a. There were no "pieces of silver" used as currency in Jesus' time - they had gone out of circulation about 300 years before.
- b. In Jesus' time, minted coins were used - currency was not "weighed out."

By using phrases that made sense in Zechariah's time but not in Jesus' time Matthew once again gives away the fact that he creates events in his gospel to match "prophecies" he finds in the Old Testament.

3. Who bought the Field of Blood?

- a. In Matthew 27:7 the chief priests buy the field.
- b. In Acts 1:18 Judas buys the field.

4. How did Judas die?

- a. In Matthew 27:5 Judas hangs himself.
- b. In Acts 1:18 he bursts open and his insides spill out.
- c. According to the apostle Paul, neither of the above is true. Paul says Jesus appeared to "the twelve" after his resurrection. Mark 14:20 makes it clear that Judas was one of the twelve.

In Matthew 19:28, Jesus tells the twelve disciples, including Judas, that when Jesus rules from his throne, they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

5. How did the Field of Blood get its name?

- a. Matthew says because it was purchased with blood money (Matthew 27:6-8).
- b. Acts says because of the bloody mess caused by Judas' bursting open (Acts 1:18-19).

IV. JESUS' TRIALS, DEATH AND RESURRECTION

A. THE TRIALS

Before listing the contradictions regarding the trials of Jesus, it should be stated that the whole episode is quite obviously a fabrication. Anyone familiar with Jewish law recognizes the impossibility of the chief priests and scribes arresting Jesus and assembling to question him during the most holy of Jewish festivals.

1. Where was Jesus taken immediately after his arrest?

- a. Matthew, Mark and Luke say that Jesus was taken directly to the high priest (Matthew 26:57, Mark 14:53 and Luke 22:54).
- b. John says that Jesus was taken first to Annas, the father-in-law of the high priest (John 18:13) who, after an indeterminate period of time, sent Jesus to the high priest (John 18:24).

2. When did the priests and scribes gather together to question Jesus?

- a. Matthew 26:57 says that on the night Jesus was arrested the priests and scribes were gathered together prior to Jesus being brought to the high priest.
- b. Mark 14:53 says the priests and scribes gathered together on the night of Jesus' arrest after Jesus was brought to the high priest.
- c. Luke 22:66 says the priests and scribes assembled the day after Jesus was arrested.
- d. John mentions only the high priest - no other priests or scribes play a role in questioning Jesus.

3. Was Jesus questioned by Herod?

- a. Luke says that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod who questioned Jesus at length and then returned Jesus to Pilate (Luke 23:7-11).
- b. Matthew, Mark and John make no mention of Herod. This, in itself, means nothing, but it brings about another contradiction later.

4. Who was responsible for Jesus' death, Pilate or the Jews?

The gospel writers go to every conceivable length to absolve the Romans in general, and Pilate in particular, of Jesus' crucifixion and to blame it on the Jews. The reason, of course, was that Christianity was going to have to exist under Roman rule for many years, which is why the New Testament contains nothing critical of the Romans, even though they were hated for their heavy taxation, and Pilate was hated for his brutality.

For the church, the Jews made an appropriate scapegoat because the Jews were a thorn in side of the early church. The Jews, of course, had far greater knowledge of Jewish laws and traditions than the largely gentile church, and were able to call attention to some of the errors being taught by the church.

The Biblical account of Pilate's offer to release Jesus but the Jews demanding the release of Barabbas is pure fiction, containing both contradictions and historical inaccuracies.

- a. What had Barabbas done?
 1. Mark 15:7 and Luke 23:19 say that Barabbas was guilty of insurrection and murder.
 2. John 18:40 says that Barabbas was a robber.
- b. Pilate's "custom" of releasing a prisoner at Passover.

This is pure invention - the only authority given by Rome to a Roman governor in situations like this was postponement of execution until after the religious festival. Release was out of the question. It is included in the gospels for the sole purpose of further removing blame for Jesus' death from Pilate and placing it on the Jews.

- c. Pilate gives in to the mob.

The gospels have Pilate giving in to an unruly mob. This is ridiculous in light of Pilate's previous and subsequent history. Josephus tells us that Pilate's method of crowd control was to send his soldiers into the mob and beat them (often killing them) into submission. Pilate was eventually recalled to Rome because of his brutality.

5. Who put the robe on Jesus?

- a. Matthew 27:28, Mark 15:17 and John 19:2 say that after Pilate had Jesus scourged and turned over to his soldiers to be crucified, the soldiers placed a scarlet or purple robe on Jesus as well as a crown of thorns.
- b. Luke 23:11, in contradiction to Matthew, Mark and John, says that the robe was placed on Jesus much

earlier by Herod and his soldiers. Luke mentions no crown of thorns.

B. THE CRUCIFIXION

1. Crucified between two robbers

Matthew 27:38 and Mark 15:27 say that Jesus was crucified between two robbers (Luke just calls them criminals; John simply calls them men). It is a historical fact that the Romans did not crucify robbers. Crucifixion was reserved for insurrectionists and rebellious slaves.

2. Peter and Mary near the cross

When the gospel writers mention Jesus talking to his mother and to Peter from the cross, they run afoul of another historical fact - the Roman soldiers closely guarded the places of execution, and nobody was allowed near (least of all friends and family who might attempt to help the condemned person).

3. The opened tombs

According to Matthew 27:51-53, at the moment Jesus died there was an earthquake that opened tombs and many people were raised from the dead. For some reason they stayed in their tombs until after Jesus was resurrected, at which time they went into Jerusalem and were seen by many people.

Here Matthew gets too dramatic for his own good. If many people came back to life and were seen by many people, it must have created quite a stir (even if the corpses were in pretty good shape!). Yet Matthew seems to be the only person aware of this happening - historians of that time certainly know nothing of it - neither do the other gospel writers.

C. THE RESURRECTION

1. Who found the empty tomb?

a. According to Matthew 28:1, only "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary."

b. According to Mark 16:1, "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome."

c. According to Luke 23:55, 24:1 and 24:10, "the women who had come with him out of Galilee." Among these women were "Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James." Luke indicates in verse 24:10 that there were at least two others.

d. According to John 20:1-4, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb alone, saw the stone removed, ran to find Peter, and returned to the tomb with Peter and another disciple.

2. Who did they find at the tomb?

- a. According to Matthew 28:2-4, an angel of the Lord with an appearance like lightning was sitting on the stone that had been rolled away. Also present were the guards that Pilate had contributed. On the way back from the tomb the women meet Jesus (Matthew 28:9).
- b. According to Mark 16:5, a young man in a white robe was sitting inside the tomb.
- c. According to Luke 24:4, two men in dazzling apparel. It is not clear if the men were inside the tomb or outside of it.
- d. According to John 20:4-14, Mary and Peter and the other disciple initially find just an empty tomb. Peter and the other disciple enter the tomb and find only the wrappings. Then Peter and the other disciple leave and Mary looks in the tomb to find two angels in white. After a short conversation with the angels, Mary turns around to find Jesus.

3. Who did the women tell about the empty tomb?

- a. According to Mark 16:8, "they said nothing to anyone."
- b. According to Matthew 28:8, they "ran to report it to His disciples."
- c. According to Luke 24:9, "they reported these things to the eleven and to all the rest."
- d. According to John 20:18, Mary Magdalene announces to the disciples that she has seen the Lord.

V. THE ASCENSION

According to Luke 24:51, Jesus' ascension took place in Bethany, on the same day as his resurrection.

According to Acts 1:9-12, Jesus' ascension took place at Mount Olivet, forty days after his resurrection.

VI. MISCELLANEOUS

A. THE UNCHANGEABLE LAW

According to Matthew 5:18, Jesus said that not the tiniest bit of the Law could be changed. However, in Mark 7:19 Jesus declares that all foods are clean, thereby drastically changing the Law.

The church tries to get around this obvious contradiction by artificially separating the Mosaic Law into the "ceremonial" law and the "moral" law, a separation which would have abhorred the Jews of Jesus' time. The Mark passage and similar ones like Acts 10:9-16 were added to accommodate the teaching of Paul regarding the Law (which was diametrically opposed to the teaching of Jesus on the Law) and to make the gospel palatable to the Gentiles.

B. NO SIGNS, ONE SIGN, OR MANY SIGNS?

At one point the Pharisees come to Jesus and ask him for a sign.

1. In Mark 8:12 Jesus says that "no sign shall be given to this generation."
2. In contradiction to Mark, in Matthew 12:39 Jesus says that only one sign would be given - the sign of Jonah. Jesus says that just as Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so he will spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Here Jesus makes an incorrect prediction - he only spends two nights in the tomb (Friday and Saturday nights), not three nights.
3. In contradiction to both Mark and Matthew, the gospel of John speaks of many signs that Jesus did:
 - a. The miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana is called the beginning (or first) of the signs that Jesus did (John 2:11).
 - b. The healing at Capernaum is the "second sign" (John 4:54).
 - c. Many people were following Jesus "because they were seeing the signs He was performing" (John 6:2).

C. SON OF DAVID?

Matthew, Mark and Luke all contain passages which have Jesus quoting Psalm 110:1 to argue that the Messiah does not need to be a son of David (Matthew 22:41-46, Mark 12:35-37 and Luke 20:41-44).

1. This contradicts many Old Testament passages that indicate that the Messiah will be a descendant of David. It also contradicts official church doctrine.
2. In Acts 2:30-36 Peter, in what is regarded as the first Christian sermon, quotes Psalm 110:1 in arguing that Jesus was the Messiah, a descendant of David.

D. THE FIG TREE

After Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem he sees a fig tree and wants some figs from it. He finds none on it so he curses the tree and it withers and dies (Matthew 21:18-20, Mark 11:12-14, 20-21).

1. Since this occurred in the early spring before Passover, it is ridiculous of Jesus to expect figs to be on the tree.
2. Matthew and Mark cannot agree on when the tree withered.
 - a. In Matthew, the tree withers at once and the disciples comment on this fact (Matthew 21:19-20).
 - b. In Mark, the tree is not found to be withered until at least the next day (Mark 11:20-21).

E. THE GREAT COMMISSION

In Matthew 28:19 Jesus tells the eleven disciples to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

1. This is obviously a later addition to the gospel, for two reasons:
 - a. It took the church over two hundred years of fighting (sometimes bloody) over the doctrine of the trinity before this baptismal formula came into use. Had it been in the original gospel, there would have been no fighting.
 - b. In Acts, when people are baptized, they are baptized just in the name of Jesus (Acts 8:16, 10:48, 19:5). Peter says explicitly that they are to "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38).
2. This contradicts Jesus' earlier statement that his message was for the Jews only (Matthew 10:5-6, 15:24). The gospels, and especially Acts, have been edited to play this down, but the contradiction remains. It was the apostle Paul who, against the express wishes of Jesus, extended the gospel (Paul's version) to the gentiles.

F. ENOCH IN THE BOOK OF JUDE

Jude 14 contains a prophecy of Enoch. Thus, if the Book of Jude is the Word of God, then the writings of "Enoch" from which Jude quotes, are also the Word of God. The Book of Enoch was used in the early church until at least the third century - Clement, Irenaeus and Tertullian were familiar with it. However, as church doctrine began to solidify, the Book of Enoch became an embarrassment to the church and in a short period of time it became the Lost Book of Enoch. A complete manuscript of the Book of Enoch was discovered in Ethiopia in 1768. Since then, portions of at least eight separate copies have been found among the Dead Sea scrolls. It is easy to see why the church had to get rid of Enoch - not only does it contain fantastic imagery (some of which was borrowed by the Book of Revelation), but it also contradicts church doctrine on several points (and, since it is obviously the work of several writers, it also contradicts itself).

G. THE APOSTLE PAUL'S CONVERSION

The Book of Acts contains three accounts of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. All of three accounts contradict each other regarding what happened to Paul's fellow travelers.

1. Acts 9:7 says they "stood speechless, hearing the voice..."
2. Acts 22:9 says they "did not hear the voice..."
3. Acts 26:14 says "when we had all fallen to the ground..."

Some translations of the Bible (the New International Version and the New American Standard, for example) try to remove the contradiction in Acts 22:9 by translating the phrase quoted above as "did not understand the voice..." However, the Greek word "akouo" is translated 373 times in the New Testament

as "hear," "hears," "hearing" or "heard" and only in Acts 22:9 is it translated as "understand." In fact, it is the same word that is translated as "hearing" in Acts 9:7, quoted above. The word "understand" occurs 52 times in the New Testament, but only in Acts 22:9 is it translated from the Greek word "akouo."

This is an example of Bible translators sacrificing intellectual honesty in an attempt to reconcile conflicting passages in the New Testament.

H. JESUS CALLS THE DISCIPLES

1. In Matthew 4:18-22 and Mark 1:16-20, Peter and Andrew are casting nets into the sea. Jesus calls out to them and they leave their nets and follow him. Jesus then goes on a little further and sees James and John mending their nets with their father. He calls to them and they leave their father and follow him.

2. In Luke 5:1-11, Jesus asks Peter to take him out in Peter's boat so Jesus can preach to the multitude. James and John are in another boat. When Jesus finishes preaching, he tells Peter how to catch a great quantity of fish (John 21:3-6 incorporates this story in a post-resurrection appearance). After Peter catches the fish, he and James and John are so impressed that after they bring their boats to shore they leave everything and follow Jesus.

3. In John 1:35-42, Andrew hears John the Baptist call Jesus the Lamb of God. Andrew then stays with Jesus for the remainder of the day and then goes to get his brother Peter and brings him to meet Jesus.

I. SHOULD THE TWELVE DISCIPLES TAKE STAFFS?

When Jesus summons the twelve disciples to send them out to proclaim the kingdom of God, he lists the things the disciples should not take with them.

1. In Matthew 10:9-10 and Luke 9:3-5, a staff is included in the list of things not to take.

2. In contradiction to Matthew and Luke, Mark 6:8 makes a specific exception - the disciples may take a staff.

J. THE APOSTLE PAUL GETS CONFUSED

In Romans 7:1-6 the apostle Paul tries to compare a Christian's "dying to the Law" to a woman who marries again after her husband has died. In doing so, Paul gets hopelessly confused about whether the Christian corresponds to the wife (by being released from the Law), or corresponds to the husband (by having died). One scholar has referred to the passage as "remarkably muddle-headed." This just goes to show that, although a brilliant man, Paul did have his bad days.

K. THE SECOND COMING

1. During the disciples' lifetime

There are several passages in the gospels where Jesus says he will return in the disciples' lifetime (Mark 13:30, Matthew 10:23, 16:28, 24:34, Luke 21:32, etc.).

The same expectation held during the period the apostle Paul wrote his letters. In 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 Paul says that the time is so short that believers should drastically change the way that they live. But Paul had a problem - some believers had died, so what would happen to them when Jesus returned?

Paul's answer in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 shows that Paul expected that at least some of those he was writing to would be alive when Jesus returned - "we who are alive, and remain..." The same passage also indicates that Paul believed that those believers who had died remained "asleep in Jesus" until he returned. However, as the delay in Jesus' return grew longer, the location of Jesus' kingdom shifted from earth to heaven and we later find Paul indicating that when believers die they will immediately "depart and be with Christ" (Philippians 1:23).

It is quite obvious that Jesus never intended to start any type of church structure since he believed he would return very shortly to rule his kingdom in person. It is also quite obvious that Jesus was wrong about when he was coming back.

2. The earth in the Book of Revelation

Revelation 1:7 says that when Jesus comes with the clouds, everybody on earth will see him. Some Christians have said that this will be literally fulfilled because the event will be broadcast by satellite over all the world's TV stations (We interrupt this broadcast...). Actually, the passage reflects the flat-earth cosmology of the time, as does also "the four corners of the earth" in Revelation 7:1 and 20:8.

Here, and in many gospel passages, Jesus is spoken of as coming with or on the clouds. This is because the Bible's view of heaven is "up" and Jesus has to pass through the clouds to get back, just as in Acts 1:9 Jesus ascended up through a cloud.

3. The Book of Daniel

The Book of Daniel is included here because, after the Book of Revelation, Daniel is the book most studied with regard to the second coming. Christians are very impressed with the detailed prophecies in Daniel that have been fulfilled. Anybody would be, if they believed that Daniel was written during the Babylonian exile, as the book of Daniel says.

However, the book itself makes it possible to pinpoint the date of its writing as 167 BC. How? Because up to that year all of Daniel's detailed prophecies came true. After that year none of them did. But how was Daniel to know that shortly after he wrote his book one of the greatest events in Israel's history, the Maccabean revolution that defeated Antiochus Epiphanes, would occur?

VII. THE CAUSES OF THE CONTRADICTIONS

There are four primary causes for most of the contradictions listed above:

A. THE MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

The gospel writers (especially Matthew) tried to show that Jesus was the Messiah by having him fulfill Old Testament "prophecies," sometimes with absurd results (as in the case of the "two donkeys" and the "thirty pieces of silver").

B. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JESUS' AND PAUL'S GOSPELS

The gospel that Jesus and his disciples proclaimed to the Jews was in accordance with what the Old Testament predicted about a human Messiah reigning over a restored kingdom of Israel, a kingdom of peace and righteousness. The people of Israel were to repent as personal righteousness was necessary to become a member of the kingdom.

In contrast to Jesus' gospel was the gospel preached to the Jews and gentiles by the apostle Paul, which Paul refers to as "my gospel" and "the gospel that I preach" to differentiate it from what was being proclaimed by the disciples. In Paul's gospel the human Jewish Messiah became a divine saviour of all nations, the restored kingdom of Israel became a heavenly kingdom, and admittance to the kingdom was based on faith rather than personal righteousness.

The two gospels caused great animosity between Paul and the original apostles, an animosity that is played down in the books of Acts and Galatians, but which still shows through in several places. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were scattered or killed, and the opposition to the gospel of Paul was largely eliminated. The gospel of Paul was incorporated into the gospel of Jesus, in many cases supplanting it.

C. THE DELAY IN JESUS' RETURN

As time went by without Jesus returning, the apostle Paul was forced to rethink things he had written about earlier, including the state of dead believers and the nature of the kingdom.

D. CREATING A HISTORY FIT FOR A GOD

When Jesus was changed from a Jewish "son of David" sitting on David's throne to a divine "son of God" sitting on a heavenly throne, it became necessary to invent a godlike biography for him. Thus the troublesome virgin birth, miracles, resurrection, etc.

The list of contradictions in this paper is by no means complete, the examples being chosen primarily from the gospels. The examples given above, however, more than prove the point that the Bible is most definitely not, in any sense, the Word of God. The church has made imaginative (and often absurd) attempts to reconcile these contradictions. None of these attempts have the ring of truth - instead they have the ring of desperation.

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