

New Testament Contradictions

By: Bernie Besherse, CJ

When I was young, and being raised in conservative, fundamental Christian churches, there were several popular phrases about the “**harmony of the gospels**,” the “**perfect harmony between the Old and New Testament**,” and so forth.

One of my father’s favorite phrases was that “*The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.*”

When I grew older, and developed some critical thinking skills, and learned how to evaluate evidence, **some things began to not be so “clear.”**

WHAT DID JOHN THE BAPTIST KNOW ABOUT JESUS & 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?**”

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 **the last supper** 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 Tarsus is also the hometown of the apostle Paul cannot be ignored as 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 out of 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.

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 alleged "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 **Jeremiah** prophesied Judas' payment and death, 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 the alleged "*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**).

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**, sent Jesus to the high priest (**John 18:24**).

2. When did the priests and scribes gather 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 **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, say that Herod and his soldiers **placed the robe on Jesus much earlier**. 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**, *when 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.

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.

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 **Psalms 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 **Psalms 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 now 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**. [**Isaiah 11:12** also speaks of the four corners of the earth.....]

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.

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יהוה

The name of our Creator is made up of four, Hebrew **VOWELS, Y H W H יהוה**
 (source: Flavius Josephus - *Antiquities of the Jews*)

The letter ה (h) when used as a vowel, usually has the "ah," "ha," or the "huh" sound. The ה is the *definite* article, or **THE, SPECIFIC, to the EXCLUSION of ALL others.**

This is exemplified in showing the difference between the word "eretz," meaning land, and the words "ha Eretz," meaning **THE Land of Israel, to the exclusion of all others.**

In Hebrew, the letters י (y) and ו (v)(w) are used interchangeably, and when located in the first, second, or third position in a word, indicate the tense of the word, either past, future, or continuing.

Being placed in the first and third positions, the י and ו indicate that the name is **both past and future,** or, - *Eternal.*

The ה preceding **both** the י and the ו means that the name is specifically, to the exclusion of all others, **both past and future,** or **THE Eternal.**

Furthermore, being *singular,* and *being found twice,* the ה would also allow the addition of the word, **ONE,** as a descriptor.

The Name, **YHWH,** could then be logically rendered as **The Eternal ONE,** because **He** has eternal existence, **to the exclusion of all others.**

It is pronounced in one, long breath, like the wind, with the accent on the middle syllable. .

eeeeeeaaaaaa UUUUUU' waaaah