

CROSS TRAINING – APOLOGETICS, CLASS 5
ANSWERING SUPPOSED BIBLICAL CONTRADICTIONS

Critics of the Bible claim that it is riddled, with contradictions. We'll investigate these supposed contradictions.

1. Supposed Biblical contradictions all have great answers.

- a. This is an important area of apologetics.
 - i. You must be ready to give an apologia to the critic or honest searcher.
- b. Sources: We're using three different sources today (there are many more) – Note: much of these notes is taken directly from the first source listed).
 - i. *101 Cleared-up contradictions in the Bible* by: Jay Smith, Alex Chowdhry, Toby Jepson and James Schaeffer.
 - ii. Rational Christianity (see www.rationalchristianity.net/143contrad.html).
 - iii. Tekton Apologetics Ministries (see www.tektonics.org).
 - iv. These notes will include some scholarly sources at the end.
 1. More sources are provided at each of the previous websites.
- c. Supposed Biblical contradictions fall into a few main categories, which will be listed with each point.
- d. Many of these “contradictions” seem quite convincing at first, but upon investigation they fall apart.
- e. Concerning the copyist errors note the following (keep in mind that these are coming from ancient manuscripts and these copyist errors are usually cleared up by looking at other scripture):

It may be helpful to interject here that there were three known ways of writing numbers in Hebrew. The earliest, a series of notations used by the Jewish settlers in the 5th century BC Elephantine Papyri (described in more detail below) was followed by a system whereby alphabetical letters were used for numbers. A further system was introduced whereby the spelling out of the numbers in full was prescribed by the guild of *so-perim*. Fortunately we have a large file of documents in papyrus from these three sources to which we can refer. As with many of these numerical discrepancies, it is the decade number that varies. It is instructive to observe that the number notations used by the Jewish settlers in the 5th century BC Elephantine Papyri, during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, from which this passage comes, evidences the earlier form of numerical notation. This consisted of a horizontal stroke ending in a downward hook at its right end to represent the numbers in tens (thus two horizontal strokes one above the other would be 20). Vertical strokes were used to represent anything less than ten. Thus eight would be /III IIII, but eighteen would be /III IIII with the addition of a horizontal line and downward hook above it. Similarly twenty-two would be /I followed by two horizontal hooks, and forty-two would be /I followed by two sets of horizontal hooks. If, then, the primary manuscript from which a copy was being carried out was blurred or smudged, one or more of the decadal notations could be missed by the copyist. It is far less likely that the copyist would have mistakenly seen an extra ten stroke that was not present in his original than that he would have failed to observe one that had been smudged. As the well-known commentator, Matthew Henry once wrote, "*Few books are not printed without mistakes; yet, authors do not disown them on account of this, nor are the errors by the press imputed to the author. The candid reader amends them by the context or by comparing them with some other part of the work.*"

1) Does God incite David to conduct the census of his people (2 Samuel 4:1), or does Satan (1 Chronicles 21:1)? (Category: misunderstood how God works in history)

- a) God allowed David to conduct this census in order to bring him back to dependence on Him. Satan got into the mess out of his own hatred for God and His people. Satan's involvement in God's work happens often in the Bible - the story of Job, the persecution of Christians (1 Peter

- 4:19 and 5:8), Jesus' temptations, Peter's denial (Lk.21:31-32) and Jesus' crucifixion (Jn.13:27). God always turns these situations around for his purposes.
- 2) **2 Samuel 24:9 gives the total population for Israel as 800,000, whereas 1 Chronicles 21:5 says it was 1,100,000.** (*Category: misunderstood the historical context or misunderstood the author's intent*)
 - a) The census was probably incomplete at the time 2 Samuel was written, although it is possible this passage was using rounded numbers, especially for Judah. It is also likely that each passage refers to different categories of men – one probably refers to men who had seen battle while the second refers to all men of fighting age. (Archer 1982:188-189 and Light of life II 1992: 189-190).
 - 3) **Samuel 24:9 gives the round figure of 500,000 fighting men in Judah, which was 30,000 more than the corresponding item in 1 Chronicles 21:5.** (*Category: misunderstood the historical context*)
 - a) 1 Chronicles 21:6 states that Joab had not yet include the census for the tribe's of Benjamin or Levi. Also see 1 Chronicles 27:23-24 (Archer 1982:188-189 and Light of life II 1992: 188).
 - 4) **2 Samuel 24:13 mentions that there will be seven years of famine whereas 1 Chronicles 21:12 mentions only three.** (*Category: misunderstood the author's intent, and misunderstood the wording*)
 - a) There are 2 possibilities here.
 - i) The 3 years probably refer to the most severe part of the drought - the 7 year period included the 2 years leading up to and 2 years winding down from the most severe part of the drought.
 - ii) Also note that the 2 Samuel passage asks, "Shall 7 years of famine come to you?" While the 1 Chronicles passage says, "Take for yourself 3 years of famine, or..." Obviously David begged God to reduce the severity of the first option. God did reduce the severity of that option but David still chose the plague. (Archer 1982:189-190 and Light of Life II 1992:190)
 - 5) **Was Ahaziah 22 (2 Kings 8:26) or 42 (2 Chronicles 22:2) when he began to rule over Jerusalem?** (*Category: copyist error*)
 - a) Ahaziah was 22. There is a minor transcription error in the 2 Chronicles passage. This is not a problem because other scripture corrects the mistake clarifying the issue. Earlier in 2 Kings 8:17 the author mentions that Ahaziah's father Joram ben Ahab was 32 when he became King, and he died eight years later, at the age of 40. Therefore Ahaziah could not have been 42 at the time of his father's death at age 40. (Archer 1982:206 and Light of Life II 1992:201)
 - 6) **Was Jehoiachin 18 years old (2 Kings 24:8) or 8 years old (2 Chronicles 36:9) when he became king of Jerusalem?** (*Category: misunderstanding of history or copyist error*)
 - a) Note that the Septuagint MSS, the Syriac and even one of the Hebrew MSS all have 18 years old as the age listed in 2 Chronicles 36:9 – the other Hebrew MSS contain a likely copyist error. (Archer 1982:206-207, 214-215, 222, 230; Nehls pg.17-18; Light of Life II 1992:204-205)
 - b) It is possible that Jehoiachin was made co-regeant with his father at age 8, to prepare for a lifetime of leadership, he then likely assumed full leadership at age 18.
 - 7) **Did king Jehoiachin rule over Jerusalem for three months (2 Kings 24:8), or for three months and ten days (2 Chronicles 36:9)?** (*Category: misunderstood the author's intent*)
 - a) Here again, as we found in challenge number 2 and 4, the author of the Chronicles has been more specific with his numbering, whereas the author of Kings is simply rounding off the number of months, assuming that the additional ten days is not significant enough to mention.
 - 8) **Did the chief of the mighty men of David lift up his spear and killed 800 men (2 Samuel 23:8) or only 300 men (1 Chronicles 11:11)?** (*Category: misunderstood the historical context or misunderstood the author's intent*)
 - a) It is quite possible that both authors may have described two different incidents, though by the same man, or one author may have only mentioned in part what the other author mentions in full. (Light of Life II 1992:187)
 - 9) **Did David bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem after defeating the Philistines (2 Samuel 5 and 6), or before (1 Chronicles chapters 13 and 14)?** (*Category: didn't read the entire text*)
 - a) This is not really a problem. Continue reading on further to 1 Chronicles 15, and you'll see that David brought the Ark after defeating the Philistines. The reason for this is that the Israelites moved the Ark of the covenant twice. The first time, they moved it from Baal, prior to the defeat of the Philistines, as we see in 2 Samuel 5 and 6 and in 1 Chronicles 15. Once the prophet Samuel narrates David's victory over the Philistines, he tells us about both times when the Ark was moved. However in 1 Chronicles, the order is as follows: the Ark was first moved from baal; then David defeated the Philistines; and finally, the Ark was moved from the House of Obed-Edom. (Light of Life II 1992:176)

- 10) Was Noah supposed to bring 2 pairs of all living creatures (Genesis 6:19-20), or was he to bring 7 pairs of 'clean' animals (Genesis 7:2; see also Genesis 7:8,9)? (Category: misquoted the text)**
- a) Note that the Genesis 7:2, 8-9 passage states that both 2 pairs of every kind of animal and 7 pairs of clean animals were to be brought (the clean animals were for sacrificial purposes – if extras weren't brought sacrifices would have ended the species). (Archer 1982:81-82)
- 11) Did David capture 1,700 of King Zobah's horsemen (2 Samuel 8:4), or was it 7,000 (1 Chronicles 18:4)? (Category: copyist error)**
- a) There are two possible solutions to these differing figures. The first by Keil and Delitzsh (page 360) is a most convincing solution. They maintain that the word for chariotry (*rekeb*) was inadvertently omitted by the scribe in copying 2 Samuel 8:4, and that the second figure, 7,000 (for the *parasim* "cavalrymen"), was necessarily reduced to 700 from the 7,000 he saw in his *Vorlage* for the simple reason that no one would write 7,000 after he had written 1,000 in the recording the one and the same figure. The omission of *rekeb* might have occurred with an earlier scribe, and a reduction from 7,000 to 700 would have then continued with the successive copies by later scribes. But in all probability the Chronicles figure is right and the Samuel numbers should be corrected to agree with that. A second solution starts from the premise that the number had been reduced to 700 as it refers to 700 rows, each consisting of 10 horse men, making a total of 7,000. (Archer 1982:184; Keil & Delitzsch 1949:360; Light of Life II 1992:182)
- 12) Did Solomon have 40,000 stalls for his horses (1 Kings 4:26), or 4,000 stalls (2 Chronicles 9:25)? (Category: copyist error, or misunderstood the historical context)**
- a) There are a number of ways to answer these puzzling differences. It is most likely that the number of stalls recorded in 1 Kings was the number at the beginning of Solomon's reign, whereas the number recorded in 2 Chronicles was the number of stalls at the end of his reign. We know that Solomon reigned for 40 years; no doubt, many changes occurred during this period. It is quite likely that he reduced the size of the military machine his father David had left him. It is also possible there was a copyist error, where the decadal number has been rubbed out or distorted due to constant use. Others believe that the stalls mentioned in 2 Chronicles were large ones that housed 10 horses each (that is, a row of ten stalls). Therefore 4,000 of these large stalls would be equivalent to 40,000 small ones. (Light of Life II 1992:191)
- 13) According to the author, did Baasha, the king of Israel die in the 26th year of king Asa's reign (1 Kings 15:33), or was he still alive in the 36th year (2 Chronicles 16:1)? (Category: misunderstood the historical context, or copyist error)**
- a) Scholars who have looked at these passages have concluded that the 36th year of Asa should be calculated from the withdrawal of the 10 tribes from Judah and Benjamin which brought about the division of the country into Judah and Israel. If we look at it from this perspective, the 36th year of the divided monarchy would be in the 16th year of Asa. This is supported by the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel, as well as contemporary records, which follow this convention. (note: for a fuller explanation of this theory, see Archer, page 225-116). (Archer 1982:226; Keil & Delitzsch 1949:366-367; Light of Life II 1992:194)
- 14) Did Solomon appoint 3,600 overseers (2 Chronicles 2:2) for the work of building the temple, or was it only 3,300 (1 Kings 5:16)? (Category: misunderstood the author's intent)**
- a) This is not too great a problem. The most likely solution is that the author of 2 Chronicles included the 300 men who were selected as reservists to take the place of any supervisors who would become ill or who had died, while the author of the 1 Kings 5:16 passage includes only the supervisory force. With the group as large as the 3,300, sickness and death certainly did occur, requiring reserves who would be called up as the need arose. (Light of Life II 1992:192)
- 15) Did Solomon build a facility containing 2,000 baths (1 Kings 7:26), or over 3,000 baths (2 Chronicles 4:5)? (Category: misunderstood the author's intent, or copyist error)**
- a) The Hebrew verb rendered "contained" and "held" is different from that translated "received"; and the meaning may be that the sea ordinarily contained 2,000 baths. But when filled to its utmost capacity it received and held 3,000 baths. Thus the chronicler simply mentions the amount of water that would make the sea like a flowing spring rather than a still pool. This informs us that 3,000 gallons of water were required to completely fill the sea which usually held 2,000 gallons. (Haley pg. 382; Light of Life II 1992:192)

16) Are the numbers of Israelites freed from Babylonian captivity correct in Ezra (Ezra 2:6, 8, 12, 15, 19, 28) or in Nehemiah (Nehemiah 7:11, 13, 17, 20, 22, 32)? (Category: *misunderstood the historical context*)

a) In chapter 2 of Ezra and in chapter 7 of Nehemiah there are about thirty-three family units that appear in both lists of Israelites returning from Babylon to Judea. Of these 33 family units listed in Ezra and Nehemiah, nineteen of the family units are identical, while fourteen show discrepancies in the number of members within the family units (though Shabbir only lists six of them). Two of the discrepancies differ by 1, one differs by 4, two by 6, two differ by 9, another differs by 11, another two by 100, another by 201, another differs by 105, a further family differs by 300, and the largest difference is the figure for the sons of Azgad, a difference of 1,100 between the accounts of Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7. How, then, are we to account for the 14 discrepancies? The answer is quite simple. Ezra's register was made up while still in Babylon (in the 450s BC), before the return to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:1-2), whereas Nehemiah's register was drawn up in Judea (around 445 BC), after the walls of Jerusalem had been rebuilt (Nehemiah 7:4-6). The lapse of so many years between the two lists (between 5-10 years) would certainly make a difference in the numbers. Most scholars believe that Nehemiah recorded those people who actually arrived at Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua in 537 or 536 BC (Nehemiah 7:7). Ezra, on the other hand, uses the earlier list of those who originally announced their intention to join the caravan of returning colonists back in Babylon, in the 450s BC. The discrepancies between these two lists point to the fact that there were new factors which arose to change their minds. Some may have fallen into disagreement, others may have discovered business reasons to delay their departure until later, whereas in some cases there were certainly some illnesses or death, and in other cases there may have been some last-minute recruits from those who first decided to remain in Babylon. Only clans or city-group's came in with a shrunken numbers. All the rest picked up last-minute recruits varying from one to 1,100. When we look at the names we find that certain names are mentioned in alternate forms. Among the Jews of that time (as well as those living in the East), a person had a name, title, and surname. Thus, the children of Hariph (Nehemiah 7:24) are the children of Jorah (Ezra 2:18), while the children of Sia (Nehemiah 7:47) are also the children of Siaha (Ezra 2:44). (Archer 1982:229-230 and Light of Life II 1992:219-220)

17) Both Ezra 2:64 and Nehemiah 7:66 agree that the totals for the whole assembly was 42,360, yet when the totals are added, Ezra - 29,818 and Nehemiah - 31,089? (Category: *copyist error*)

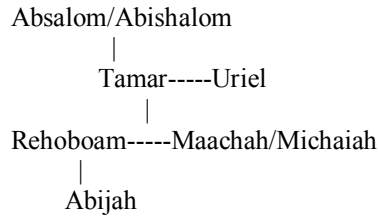
a) There are two possible answers to this seeming dilemma. The first is that this is most likely a copyist's error. The original texts must have had the correct totals, but somewhere along the line of transmission, a scribe made an error in one of the lists, and changed the total in the other so that they would match, without first totaling up the numbers for the families in each list.

18) Did 200 singers (Ezra 2:65) or 245 singers (Nehemiah 7:67) accompany the assembly? (Category: *Number rounded*)

a) Ezra simply rounded this number.

19) Was King Abijah's mother's name Michaiiah, daughter of Uriel of Gibeah (2 Chronicles 13:2) or Maachah, daughter of Absalom (2 Chronicles 11:20 & 2 Samuel 13:27)? (Category: *misunderstood the Hebrew usage*)

a) This apparent contradiction rests on the understanding of the Hebrew word *bat*, equivalent to the English *daughter*. Although usually used to denote a first generation female descendant, it can equally refer to more distant kinship. An example of this is 2 Samuel 1:24, which states: 'O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul...' As this is approximately 900 years after Israel (also called Jacob) actually lived, it is clear that this refers to the Israelite women, his distant female descendants. When seen in this light, the 'contradiction' vanishes. 2 Chronicles 13:2 correctly states that Michaiiah is a daughter of Uriel. We can assume that Uriel married Tamar, Absalom's only immediate daughter. Together they had Michaiiah who then married king Rehoboam and became the mother of Abijah. 2 Chronicles 11:20 and 1 Kings 15:2, in stating that Maachah was a daughter of Absalom, simply link her back to her more famous grandfather, instead of her lesser known father, to indicate her royal lineage. Abishalom is a variant of Absalom and Michaiiah is a variant of Maachah. Therefore, the family tree looks like this:



20) Joshua and the Israelites did (Joshua 10:23,40) or did not (Joshua 15:63) capture Jerusalem?

(Category: misread the text)

- a) The short answer is, not in this campaign. The verses given are in complete harmony and the confusion arises solely from misreading the passage concerned.

21) Was Jacob (Matthew 1:16) or Heli (Luke 3:23) the father of Joseph and husband of Mary?

(Category: misunderstood the Hebrew usage)

- a) The answer to this is simple but requires some explanation. Most scholars today agree that Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph and Luke gives that of Mary, making Jacob the father of Joseph and Heli the father of Mary. This is shown by the two narrations of the virgin birth. Matthew 1:18-25 tells the story only from Joseph's perspective, while Luke 1:26-56 is told wholly from Mary's point of view. A logical question to ask is why Joseph is mentioned in both genealogies? The answer is again simple. Luke follows strict Hebrew tradition in mentioning only males. Therefore, in this case, Mary is designated by her husband's name. This reasoning is clearly supported by two lines of evidence. In the first, every name in the Greek text of Luke's genealogy, with the one exception of Joseph, is preceded by the definite article (e.g. 'the' Heli, 'the' Matthat). Although not obvious in English translations, this would strike anyone reading the Greek, who would realize that it was tracing the line of Joseph's wife, even though his name was used. The second line of evidence is the Jerusalem Talmud, a Jewish source. This recognizes the genealogy to be that of Mary, referring to her as the daughter of Heli (Hagigah 2:4). (Fruchtenbaum 1993:10-13)

22) Did Jesus descend from Solomon (Matthew 1:6) or from Nathan (Luke 3:31), both of whom are sons of David? (Category: misunderstood the Hebrew usage)

- a) This is directly linked to 'contradiction' 21. Having shown that Matthew gives Joseph's genealogy and Luke gives that of Mary, it is clear that Joseph was descended from David through Solomon and Mary through Nathan.

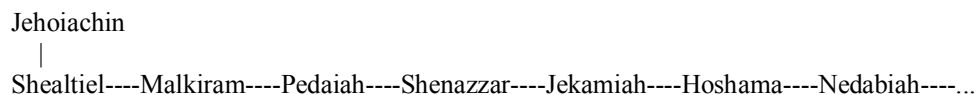
23) Was Jechoniah (Matthew 1:12) or Neri (Luke 3:27) the father of Shealtiel? (Category: misunderstood the Hebrew usage)

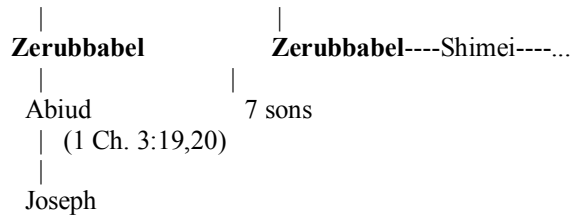
- a) Once again, this problem disappears when it is understood that two different genealogies are given from David to Jesus, those of both Mary and Joseph (see #26). Two different genealogies mean two different men named Shealtiel, a common Hebrew name. Therefore, it is not surprising to recognize that they both had different fathers!

24) Which son of Zerubbabel was an ancestor of Jesus Christ, Abiud (Matthew 1:13) or Rhesa (Luke 3:27), and what about Zerubbabel in (1 Chronicles 3:19-20)? (Category: misunderstood the Hebrew usage)

- a) As with #23, two different Shealtiels necessitates two different Zerubbabels, so it is no problem that their sons had different names. It should not surprise us that there was a Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel in both Mary's and Joseph's ancestry. Matthew tells us that Joseph's father was named Jacob. Of course, the Bible records another Joseph son of Jacob, who rose to become the second most powerful ruler in Egypt (Genesis 37-47). We see no need to suggest that these two men are one and the same, so we should have no problem with two men named Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel.

A comparison of Matthew and 1 Chronicles gives the following possible family tree:





- 25) Was Joram (Matthew 1:8) or Amaziah (2 Chronicles 26:1) the father of Uzziah?** *(Category: misunderstood the Hebrew usage)*
- a) This answer is of a similar nature to that in #24. Just as the Hebrew *bat* (daughter) can be used to denote a more distant descendant, so can the Hebrew *ben* (son). Jesus is referred to in Matthew 1:1 as the son of David, the son of Abraham. Both the genealogies trace Jesus' ancestry through both these men, illustrating the usage of 'son'. Although no Hebrew manuscripts of Matthew's gospel are extant today, it is clear that he was a Jew writing from a Hebrew perspective and therefore completely at home with the Hebrew concept of son ship. With this in mind, it can easily be shown that Amaziah was the immediate father of Uzziah (also called Azariah). Joram/Jehoram, on the other hand, was Uzziah's great-great-grandfather and a direct ascendant. The line goes Joram/Jehoram - Ahaziah - Joash - Amaziah - Azariah/Uzziah (2 Chronicles 21:4-26:1). Matthew's telescoping of Joseph's genealogy is quite acceptable, as his purpose is simply to show the route of descent. He comments in 1:17 that there were three sets of fourteen generations. This reveals his fondness for numbers and links in directly with the designation of Jesus as the son of David. In the Hebrew language, each letter is given a value. The total value of the name David is fourteen and this is probably the reason why Matthew only records fourteen generations in each section, to underline Jesus' position as the son of David.
- 26) Was Josiah (Matthew 1:11) or Jehoiakim (1 Chronicles 3:16) the father of Jechoniah?** *(Category: misunderstood the Hebrew usage)*
- a) This question is essentially the same as #24. Jehoiakim was Jeconiah's father and Josiah his grandfather. This is quite acceptable and results from Matthew's aesthetic telescoping of the genealogy, not from any error.
- 27) Were there fourteen (Matthew 1:17) or thirteen (Matthew 1:12-16) generations from the Babylonian exile until Christ?** *(Category: misunderstood the Hebrew usage)*
- a) As Matthew clearly states (1:17), there were fourteen. In the first section there are fourteen names, in the second fifteen and in the third, fourteen. Perhaps the simplest way of resolving the problem is to suggest that in the first and third sections, the first and last person is included as a generation, whereas not in the second. In any case, as Matthew has clearly telescoped his genealogy with good reason, a mistake on his part is by no means shown conclusively
- 28) Who was the father of Shelah; Cainan (Luke 3:35-36) or Arphaxad (Genesis 11:12)?** *(Category: misunderstood the Hebrew usage)*
- a) The most probable answer to this is that the genealogy in the Masoretic text of Genesis telescopes the generations as does Matthew in his list. When we look at the Septuagint (LXX), we find the name of Cainan included as the father of Shelah, echoing what we find in Luke. Luke, writing in Greek, would have used the Septuagint as his authority.
- 29) John the Baptist was (Matthew 11:14; 17:10-13) or was not Elijah to come (John 1:19-21)?** *(Category: misunderstood the historical context)*
- a) Matthew records Jesus saying that John the Baptist was the Elijah who was to come, while John seems to record John the Baptist denying it. The reason for this apparent inconsistency is a lack of contextualization by readers. The priests and Levites came to John the Baptist and asked him if he was Elijah. Quite a funny question to ask someone, unless you know the Jewish Scriptures. For God says through the prophet Malachi that He will send Elijah to the people of Israel before a certain time. Therefore as the Jewish people were expecting Elijah, the question is quite logical. John was about 30 years when he was asked this question. His parents were already dead; he was the only son of Zechariah from the tribe of Levi. So when asked if he was Elijah who ascended up into heaven about 878 years earlier, the answer was obviously "No, I am not Elijah." Jesus also testifies, albeit indirectly, to John not being Elijah in Matthew 11:11 where he says that John is greater than all people who have ever been born. Moses was greater than Elijah, but John was

greater than them both. So what did Jesus mean when he says of John "he is the Elijah who was to come"? The angel Gabriel (Jibril in Arabic) speaks to Zechariah of his son, John, who was not yet born, saying "he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous - to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17). The Angel refers to two prophecies, Isaiah 40:3-5 (see Luke 3:4-6 to see this applied again to John the Baptist) and Malachi 4:5-6 mentioned above, which says "*See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers*". Gabriel unmistakably says that John is the "Elijah" whom God foretold through Malachi the prophet. So, was John Elijah? No. But had the priests and Levites asked him, "Are you the one the prophet Malachi speaks of as 'Elijah'?" John would have responded affirmatively. Jesus in Matthew 17:11-13 says that the prophecy of Malachi is true, but Elijah had already come. He says that this "Elijah" suffered, like he, Jesus will suffer; "*the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist*". Therefore, once we understand the context it is clear; John was not the literal Elijah, but he was the Elijah that the prophecy spoke of, the one who was to (and did) prepare the way for the Messiah, Jesus, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world", John 1:29.

30) Jesus would (Luke 1:32) or would not (Matthew 1:11; 1 Chronicles 3:16 & Jeremiah 36:30) inherit David's throne? (*Category: misunderstood the Hebrew usage*)

- a) This answer follows on directly from that to #21. Having shown that Matthew's genealogy is that of Joseph, it is obvious from Jeremiah 36:30 that none of Joseph's physical descendants were qualified to sit on David's throne as he himself was descended from Jeconiah. However, as Matthew makes clear, Jesus was not a physical descendant of Joseph. After having listed Joseph's genealogy with the problem of his descentance from Jeconiah, Matthew narrates the story of the virgin birth. Thus he proves how Jesus avoids the Jeconiah problem and remains able to sit on David's throne. Luke, on the other hand, shows that Jesus' true physical descentance was from David apart from Jeconiah, thus fully qualifying him to inherit the throne of his father David. The announcement of the angel in Luke 1:32 completes the picture: 'the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David'. This divine appointment, together with his physical descentance, make him the only rightful heir to David's throne. (Fruchtenbaum 1993:12)

31) Jesus rode into Jerusalem on one colt (Mark 11:7; cf. Luke 19:35), or a colt and an ass (Matthew 21:7)? (*Category: misread the text & misunderstood the historical context*)

- a) The accusation is that the Gospels contradict about how many donkeys Jesus rode into Jerusalem on. This accusation is based on not reading the text of Matthew properly and ignoring his full point about this event. It first should be noted that all four Gospel writers refer to this event, the missing reference above being John 12:14-15. Mark, Luke and John are all in agreement that Jesus sat on the colt. Logic shows that there is no "contradiction" as Jesus cannot ride on two animals at once! So, why does Matthew mention two animals? The reason is clear. Even by looking at Matthew in isolation, we can see from the text that Jesus did not ride on two animals, but only on the colt. For in the two verses preceding Matthew says, "*Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gently and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey'*." Matthew 21:5. By saying "a donkey" and then "on a colt, the foal of a donkey" Zechariah is using classic Hebrew sentence structure and poetic language known as "parallelism", simply repeating the same thing again in another way, as a parallel statement. So why does Matthew say that the colt and its mother were brought along in verse seven? The reason is simple. Matthew, who was an eyewitness (where as Mark and Luke were quite possibly not) emphasizes the immaturity of the colt, too young to be separated from its mother. As the colt had never been ridden the probability was that it was still dependent on its mother. It would have made the entry to Jerusalem easier if the mother donkey were led along down the road, as the foal would naturally follow her, even though he had never before carried a rider and had not yet been trained to follow a roadway. Here again we see that there is no contradiction between the synoptic accounts, but only added detail on the part of Matthew as one who viewed the event while it was happening.

32) Simon Peter finds out that Jesus was the Christ by a revelation from heaven (Matthew 16:17), or by His brother Andrew (John 1:41)? (*Category: too literalistic an interpretation*)

The emphasis of Matthew 16:17 is that Simon did not just hear it from someone else: God had made it clear to him. That does not preclude him being told by other people.

33) Jesus first met Simon Peter and Andrew by the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 4:18-22), or on the banks of the river Jordan (John 1:42-43)? (Category: misread the text)

- a) The accusation is that one Gospel records Jesus meeting Simon Peter and Andrew by the sea of Galilee, while the other says he met them by the river Jordan. However this accusation falls flat on its face as the different writers pick up the story in different places. Both are true. John 1:35 onwards says Jesus met them by the river Jordan and that they spent time with him there. Andrew (and probably Peter too) were disciples of John the Baptist. They left this area and went to Galilee, in which region was the village of Cana where Jesus then performed his first recorded miracle. "After this he went down to Capernaum with his mothers and brothers and disciples. There they stayed for a few days." John 2:12. Peter and Andrew were originally from a town named Bethsaida (John 2:44) but now lived in Capernaum (Matthew 8:14-15, Mark 1:30-31, Luke 4:38-39), a few miles from Bethsaida. They were fishermen by trade, so it was perfectly normal for them to fish when they were home during these few days (for at this time Jesus was only just beginning public teaching or healing). This is where Matthew picks up the story. As Peter and Andrew fish in the Lake of Galilee, Jesus calls them to follow him - to leave all they have behind and become his permanent disciples. Before this took place, he had not asked them, but they had followed him because of John the Baptist's testimony of him (John 1:35-39). Now, because of this testimony, plus the miracle in Cana, as well as the things Jesus said (John 1:47-51), as well as the time spent with the wisest and only perfect man who ever lived etc., it is perfectly understandable for them to leave everything and follow him.

34) When Jesus met Jairus, his daughter 'had just died' (Matthew 9:18), or was 'at the point of death' (Mark 5:23)? (Category: too literalistic an interpretation)

- a) When Jairus left his home, his daughter was very sick, and at the point of death, or he wouldn't have gone to look for Jesus. When he met Jesus he certainly was not sure whether his daughter had already succumbed. Therefore, he could have uttered both statements; Matthew mentioning her death, while Mark speaking about her sickness. However, it must be underlined that this is not a detail of any importance to the story, or to us. The crucial points are clear:
- Jairus's daughter had a fatal illness.
 - All that could have been done would already have been: she was as good as dead if not already dead.
 - Jairus knew that Jesus could both heal her and bring her back from the dead. As far as he was concerned, there was no difference.

Therefore it is really of no significance whether the girl was actually dead or at the point of death when Jairus reached Jesus.'

35) Jesus allowed (Mark 6:8), or did not allow (Matthew 10:9; Luke 9:3) his disciples to keep a staff on their journey? (Category: misunderstood the Greek usage)

- a) It is alleged that the Gospel writers contradict each other concerning whether Jesus allowed his disciples to take a staff on their journey or not. The problem is one of translation. In Matthew we read the English translation of the Greek, which is rendered in the King James (Authorized) translation as "Provide neither gold, nor silver nor yet staves". According to a Greek dictionary this word means "to get for oneself, to acquire, to procure, by purchase or otherwise" (Robinson, Lexicon of the New Testament). Therefore in Matthew Jesus is saying "Do not procure anything in addition to what you already have. Just go as you are." Matthew 10 and Mark 6 agree that Jesus directed his disciples to take along no extra equipment. Luke 9:3 agrees in part with the wording of Mark 6:8, using the verb in Greek, ("take"); but then, like Matthew adds "no staff, no bag, no bread, no money". But Matthew 10:10 includes what was apparently a further clarification: they were not to *acquire* a staff as part of their special equipment for the tour. Mark 6:8 seems to indicate that this did not necessarily involve discarding any staff they already had as they traveled the country with Jesus.

- 36) Herod did (Matthew 14:2; Mark 6:16) or did not (Luke 9:9) think that Jesus was John the Baptist?** (Category: *misread the text*)
- a) There is no contradiction here. In Luke 9:9, Herod asks who this incredible person could be, as John was now dead. In Matthew 14:2 and Mark 6:16 he gives his answer: after considering who Jesus could be, he concluded that he must be John the Baptist, raised from the dead. By the time Herod actually met Jesus, at his trial, he may not have still thought that it was John (Luke 23:8-11). If that were the case, he had most probably heard more about him and understood John's claims about preparing for one who was to come (John 1:15-34). He may well have heard that Jesus had been baptized by John, obviously ruling out the possibility that they were the same person.
- 37) John the Baptist did (Matthew 3:13-14) or did not (John 1:32-33) recognize Jesus before his baptism?** (Category: *misunderstood the author's intent*)
- a) John's statement in John 1:33 that he would not have known Jesus except for seeing the Holy Spirit alight on him and remain, can be understood to mean that John would not have known *for sure* without this definite sign. John was filled with the Holy Spirit from before his birth (Luke 1:15) and we have record of an amazing recognition of Jesus even while John was in his mother's womb (Luke 1:41-44). In the light of this prior knowledge and the witness of the Holy Spirit within John, it is most likely that this sign of the Holy Spirit resting on Jesus was simply a sure confirmation of what he already thought. God removed any doubt so that he could be sure that it was not his imagination or someone else's mistake.
- 38) John the Baptist did (John 1:32-33) or did not (Matthew 11:2) recognize Jesus after his baptism?** (Category: *misread the text*)
- a) In the passage of John 1:29-36 it is abundantly clear that John recognized Jesus. We should have no doubt at all about this. Matthew 11:2 takes place later on, and many things have happened in the interim. John's original knowledge of Jesus was limited and it seems that subsequent events had disillusioned him somewhat. He did not know exactly what form Jesus' ministry would take. John surely wondered what had gone wrong: had he misunderstood the Messiah's role, or perhaps he had made a bigger mistake in thinking Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus' answer in Matthew 11:4-6 makes it clear, *"Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."*
- 39) When Jesus bears witness to himself, is his testimony not true (John 5:31) or is his testimony true (John 8:14)?** (Category: *misunderstood the historical context*)
- a) *"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid"* (John 5:31) compared with *"Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid"* (John 8:14). It appears to be a contradiction, but only if the context is ignored. In John 5 Jesus is speaking about how he cannot claim on his own to be the Messiah nor the Son of God, **unless** he is in line with God's revealed word. That is, without fulfilling the prophecies spoken in the Old Testament. But as Jesus did fulfill them and was proclaimed to be the Messiah by John the Baptist who the prophets also spoke of as heralding the way for the Messiah, then Jesus was indeed who he claimed to be, the Son of God. Jesus says of the Jewish scriptures which his listeners studied diligently, *"These are the Scriptures that testify about me"*. We read of a somewhat different setting however in John 8. Jesus has just once again claimed to be the Messiah by quoting Old Testament Messianic prophecies and applying them to himself (John 8:12, Isaiah 9:2, Malachi 4:2). *"Then some Pharisees challenged him, 'Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid'."* Verse 13. It is to this statement that Jesus responds "Yes it is". Why? Because the Pharisees were using a law from Deuteronomy 19:15 which says *"One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If a malicious witness takes the stand."* Therefore they broadened the law to mean more that it does actually say. Indeed, the testimony of one man was valid - however not enough to convict, but enough when used in defense to bring an acquittal. This law is not speaking about anyone making a claim about himself, only in a court when accused of a crime. So when Jesus says in reply to them *"Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid"* he is right to do so as what the law referred to did not directly apply. He also says that he knew exactly who he was, whereas they did not. He was not lying to them; he was the sinless Messiah of God. Therefore his word could be

trusted. There is no contradiction, simply clarity and great depth which can be seen when Jesus' is viewed in context, in his fertile Jewish culture and setting.

- 40) When Jesus entered Jerusalem he cleansed (Matthew 21:12) or did not cleanse (Mark 11:1-17) the temple that same day, but the next day? (Category: misunderstood the author's intent)**
- a) The key to understanding may be found in Matthew's use of narrative. At times he can be seen to arrange his material in topical order rather than strict chronological sequence. See the next question for more details. With this in mind, it is probable that Matthew relates the cleansing of the temple along with the triumphal entry, even though the cleansing occurred the next day. Verse 12 states that 'Jesus entered the temple' but does not say clearly that it was immediately following the entry into Jerusalem. Verse 17 informs us that he left Jerusalem and went to Bethany, where he spent the night. Mark 11:11 also has him going out to Bethany for the night, but this is something that he did each night of that week in Jerusalem. Matthew 21:23 states: "*Jesus entered the temple courts*" in a similar fashion to verse 12, yet Luke 20:1 says that the following incident occurred "*one day*", indicating that it may not have been immediately after the fig tree incident. According to this possible interpretation, Jesus entered the temple on the day of his triumphal entry, looked around and retired to Bethany. The next morning he cursed the fig tree on the way to Jerusalem (at which time it started to wither) and cleansed the temple when he got there. Returning to Bethany that evening, probably as it was getting dark, the withered fig tree may not have been noticed by the disciples. It was only the following morning in the full light of day that they saw what had happened to it. (Archer 1994:334.335)
- 41) Matthew 21:19 says that the tree which Jesus cursed withered at once, whereas Mark 11:20 maintains that it withered overnight. (Category: misunderstood the author's intent)**
- a) The differences found between the accounts of Matthew and Mark concerning the fig tree have much to do with the order both Matthew and Mark used in arranging their material. When we study the narrative technique of Matthew in general, we find (as was noted in #40 above) that he sometimes arranges his material in a topical order rather than in the strictly chronological order that is more often characteristic of Mark and Luke. For instance, if we look at chapters 5-7 of Matthew which deal with the sermon on the Mount, it is quite conceivable that portions of the sermon on the Mount teachings are found some times in other settings, such as in the sermon on the plain in Luke (6:20-49). Matthew's tendency was to group his material in themes according to a logical sequence. We find another example of this exhibited in a series of parables of the kingdom of heaven that make up chapter 13. Once a theme has been broached, Matthew prefers to carry it through to its completion, as a general rule. When we see it from this perspective it is to Mark that we look to when trying to ascertain the chronology of an event. In Mark's account we find that Jesus went to the temple on both Palm Sunday and the following Monday. But in Mark 11:11-19 it is clearly stated that Jesus did not expel the tradesmen from the temple until Monday, after he had cursed the barren fig tree (verses 12 to 14). To conclude then, Matthew felt it suited his topical approach more effectively to include the Monday afternoon action with the Sunday afternoon initial observation, whereas Mark preferred to follow a strict chronological sequence. These differences are not contradictory, but show merely a different style in arrangement by each author. (Archer 1982:334-335 and Light of Life III 1992:96-97)
- 42) In Matthew 26:48-50 Judas came up and kissed Jesus, whereas in John 18:3-12 Judas could not get close enough to Jesus to kiss him. (Category: misquoted the text)**
- a) The fact that John does not mention a kiss does not mean Judas did not use a kiss. Many times we have seen where one of the gospel writers includes a piece of information which another leaves out. That does not imply that either one is wrong, only that, as witnesses, they view an event by different means, and so include into their testimony only that which they deem to be important. (Light of Life III 1992:107)
- 43) Did Peter deny Christ three times before the cock crowed (John 13:38), or three times before the cock crowed twice (Mark 14:30, 72)? (Category: misunderstanding of text)**
- a) This accusation is based on the fact that Jesus says to Peter "*the cock will not crow till you have denied me three times*" (John 13:38) and also "*Before the cock crows twice you will deny me three times*" (Mark 14:30). In John, Jesus states only that the cock will crow, not how many times it will crow. Mark simply includes more information.
- 44) Jesus did (John 19:17) or did not (Matthew 27:31-32) bear his own cross? (Category: misread the text or the texts are compatible with a little thought)**

- a) John 19:17 states that he went out carrying his own cross to the place of the skull. Matthew 27:31,32 tells us that he was led out to be crucified and that it was only as they were going out to Golgotha that Simon was forced to carry the cross. The contradiction vanishes. Jesus started out carrying the cross and Simon took over at some point during the journey.
- 45) Did Jesus die before (Matthew 27:50-51; Mark 15:37-38), or after (Luke 23:45-46) the curtain of the temple was torn?** (*Category: misread the text*)
- a) After reading the three passages Matthew 27:50-51, Mark 15:37-38 and Luke 23:45-46, it is not clear where the apparent contradictions are. All three passages point to the fact that at the time of Jesus' death the curtain in the temple was torn. It does not stand to reason that because both Matthew and Mark mention the event of Christ's death before mentioning the curtain tearing, while Luke mentions it in reverse order, that they are therefore in contradiction, as Matthew states that the two events happened, 'At that moment', and the other two passages nowhere deny this.
- 46) Did Jesus say everything openly (John 18:20) or did he speak secretly to his disciples (Mark 4:34, Matthew 13:10-11)?** (*Category: misread the text and misunderstood the historical context*)
- a) There is no contradiction: Jesus spoke openly to the world not keeping secrets; He also spoke individually with His disciples when with them.
- b) There are further rabbinical and historical explanations for this which can also be provided. (Archer 1994:363-364)
- 47) The two thieves crucified with Jesus either did (Mark 15:32) or did not (Luke 23:43) mock Jesus?** (*Category: too literalistic an interpretation*)
- a) This apparent contradiction asks did both thieves crucified with Jesus mock him or just one. Mark 15:23 says both did. Luke 23:43 says one mocked and one defended Jesus. It isn't too difficult to see what is going on here. The obvious conclusion is that both thieves mocked Jesus initially. However after Jesus had said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing," one of the robbers seems to have had a change of heart and repented on the cross, while the other continued in his mocking.
- 48) Did Jesus ascend to Paradise the same day of the crucifixion (Luke 23:43), or two days later (John 20:17)?** (*Category: misunderstood how God works in history*)
- a) The idea that Jesus contradicts himself (or the Gospels contradict themselves) concerning whether he had ascended to Paradise or not after his death on the cross is due to assumptions about Paradise as well as the need to contextualize. Jesus says to the thief on the cross "Today you will be with me in Paradise". This was indeed true. For the thief was to die that same day on earth; but in paradise "today" is any day in this world, as Heaven is outside of time. Jesus says to Mary Magdalene, according to the rendering of the King James translation, that he had not yet "ascended" to his Father. However, this could also be rendered "returned" to his Father. Jesus was with God, and was God, before the beginning of the world (John 1 and Philippians 2:6-11). He left all his glory and became fully God, fully man. Later, God did exalt Jesus to the highest place once more, to the right hand of Himself (see Acts 7:56). This had not yet taken place in John 20:17. Jesus saying "for I have not yet returned to the Father" does not rule out the possibility that he was in heaven between his death and resurrection in "our time" (although Heaven is outside of time). By way of parallel (albeit an imperfect one), I do go to my original home and the area where I grew up without returning there. Returning as in myself being restored to what was. However, a more likely understanding of the text has to do with the context. Another way to say, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not ascended to my Father. Go instead to my brothers...", would be, "Do not hang on to me Mary - I have not left you all yet. You will see me again. But now, I want you to go and tell my disciples that I am going to my Father soon, but not yet".
- 49) When Paul was on the road to Damascus he saw a light and heard a voice. Did those who were with him hear the voice (Acts 9:7), or did they not (Acts 22:9)?** (*Category: misunderstood the Greek usage or the text is compatible with a little thought*)
- a) Although the same Greek word is used in both accounts (*akouo*), it has two distinct meanings: to perceive sound and to understand. Therefore, the explanation is clear: they heard something but did not understand what it was saying. Paul, on the other hand, heard and understood. There is no contradiction. (Haley p.359)
- 50) When Paul saw the light and fell to the ground, did his traveling companions fall (Acts 26:14) or did they not fall (Acts 9:7) to the ground?** (*Category: misunderstood the Greek usage or the text is compatible with a little thought*)

- a) Acts 26:14 states that the initial falling to the ground occurred when the light flashed around, before the voice was heard. Acts 9:7 says that the men 'stood speechless' after the voice had spoken. There would be ample time for them to stand up whilst the voice was speaking to Saul, especially as it had no significance or meaning to them. Saul, on the other hand, understood the voice and was no doubt transfixed with fear as he suddenly realized that for so long he had been persecuting and killing those who were following God. He had in effect been working against the God whom he thought he was serving. This terrible realization evidently kept him on the ground longer than his companions. (Haley p.359)

51) Did the voice tell Paul what he was to do on the spot (Acts 26:16-18), or was he commanded to go to Damascus to be told what to do (Acts 9:7; 22:10)? (*Category: misunderstood the historical context*)

- a) Paul was told his duties in Damascus as can be seen from Acts 9 and 22. However in Acts 26 the context is different. In this chapter Paul doesn't worry about the chronological or geographical order of events because he is talking to people who have already heard his story. In Acts 26:2-23 Luke, however, narrates the speech given by Paul, (who was imprisoned for at least two years after his arrest in Jerusalem and his speech in Acts 22.). This was given to the Roman Governor Festus and King Herod Agrippa, both of whom were already familiar with the case. (Read the preceding Chapters). Therefore they did not require a full blown explanation of Paul's case, but a summary. Which is exactly what Paul gives them. This is further highlighted by Paul reminding them of his Jewish credentials in one part of a sentence, "I lived as a Pharisee," as opposed to two sentences in Acts 22:3. Paul also later in the Chapter is aware that King Agrippa is aware of the things that have happened in verses 25-27.

52) Did 24,000 Israelites die in the plague in 'Shittim' (Numbers 25:1, 9), or was it only 23,000 Israelites who died (1 Corinthians 10:8)? (*Category: confused this incident with another*)

- a) This apparent contradiction asks how many people died from the plague that occurred in Shittim. Numbers 25:1-9 and 1 Corinthians 10:8 are contrasted. 1 Corinthians 10, is referring to the plague in Exodus 32:28, which takes place at Mt. Sinai and not to that found in Numbers 25, which takes place in Shittim, amongst the Moabites. If there is any doubt refer to verse 7 of 1 Corinthians 10, which quotes almost exactly from Exodus 32:6, "Afterwards they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." Now there are those who may say that the number killed in the Exodus 32 account were 3,000 (Exodus 32:28) another seeming contradiction, but one which is easily rectified once you read the rest of the text. The 3,000 killed in verse 28 account for only those killed by men with swords. This is followed by a plague which the Lord brings against those who had sinned against him in verse 35, which says, "And the Lord struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made." It is to this plague which Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 10:8. (Geisler/Howe 1992:458-459)

53) Did 70 members of the house of Jacob come to Egypt (Genesis 46:27), or was it 75 members (Acts 7:14)? (*Category: misunderstood the historical context*)

- a) This apparent contradiction asks how many members of the house of Jacob went to Egypt. The two passages contrasted are Genesis 46:27 and Acts 7:14. However both passages are correct. In the Genesis 46:1-27 the total number of direct descendants that traveled to Egypt with Jacob were 66 in number according to verse 26. This is because Judah was sent on ahead in verse 28 of Chapter 46 and because Joseph and his two sons were already in Egypt. However in verse 27 all the members of the family are included, including Joseph and his sons and Judah making a total number of 70, referring to the total number of Jacob's family that ended up in Egypt not just those that traveled with him to Egypt. In the older Septuagint and Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts the number given in verse 27 is 75. This is because they also include Joseph's three grandsons and two great grandsons listed in Numbers 26:28-37, and in at least the Septuagint version their names are listed in Genesis 46:20. Therefore the Acts 7:14 quotation of Stephen's speech before his martyrdom is correct because he was quoting from the Septuagint.

54) Did Judas buy a field (Acts 1:18) with his blood-money for betraying Jesus, or did he throw it into the temple (Matthew 27:5)? (*Category: misunderstood the author's intent*)

- a) This apparent contradiction asks, 'What did Judas do with the blood money he received for betraying Jesus?' In Acts 1:18 it is claimed that Judas bought a field. In Matthew 27:5 it was thrown into the Temple from where the priests used it to buy a field. However, upon closer scrutiny it appears one passage is just a summary of the other. Matthew 27:1-10 describes in detail

the events that happened in regard to Judas betrayal of Jesus, and their significance in terms of the fulfillment of the Scriptures. In particular he quotes from the prophet Zechariah 11:12-13 which many think are clarifications of the prophecies found in Jeremiah 19:1-13 and 32:6-9. In the Acts 1:18-19 passage however, Luke is making a short resume of something that people already knew, as a point of clarification to the speech of Peter, among the believers (the same situation as we found in question number 57 earlier). This is illustrated by the fact that in verse 19 he says, "Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this". Also it is more than probable that the Gospel record was already being circulated amongst the believers at the time of Luke's writing. Luke, therefore, was not required to go into detail about the facts of Judas' death.

- 55) Did Judas die by hanging himself (Matthew 27:5) or by falling headlong and bursting open with all his bowels gushing out (Acts 1:18)?** (Category: the texts are compatible with a little thought)
- a) This alleged contradiction is related to the fact that Matthew in his Gospel speaks of Judas hanging himself but in Acts 1:18 Luke speaks about Judas falling headlong and his innards gushing out. However both of these statements are true. Matthew 27:1-10 mentioned the fact that Judas died by hanging himself in order to be strictly factual. Luke, however in his report in Acts 1:18-19 wants to cause the feeling of revulsion among his readers, for the field spoken about and for Judas, and nowhere denies that Judas died by hanging. According to tradition, it would seem that Judas hanged himself on the edge of a cliff, above the Valley of Hinnom. Eventually the rope snapped, was cut or untied and Judas fell upon the field below as described by Luke.
- 56) Is the field called the 'field of blood' because the priest bought it with blood money (Matthew 27:8), or because of Judas's bloody death (Acts 1:19)?** (Category: misunderstood the wording)
- a) Both passages agree that it was due to it being bought by blood-money. Acts 1:18-19 starts by saying, "With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field". So it begins with the assumption that the field was bought by the blood-money, and then the author intending to cause revulsion for what had happened describes Judas bloody end on that piece of real estate.
- 57) Is all scripture profitable (2 Timothy 3:16) or not profitable (Hebrews 7:18)?** (Category: misunderstood how God works in history)
- a) The accusation is that the Bible says all scripture is profitable as well as stating that a former commandment is weak and useless, and therein lies the contradiction. This is a contextual problem and arises through ignorance of what God promised to do speaking through the Prophets, concerning the two covenants which He instituted.
- 58) Was the exact wording on the cross, as (Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38, and John 19:19) all seem to have different wordings?** (Category: misread the text)
- a) This seeming contradiction takes on the question, 'What was the exact wording on the cross?' It is argued that Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38, and John 19:19 all use different words posted above Jesus's head while hanging on the cross. This can be better understood by looking at John 19:20 which says, "Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek." It is interesting that Pilate is said to have written the sign and may have written different things in each of the languages according to Pilate's proficiency in each of the languages. The key charge brought against Jesus in all of the Gospels is that he claimed to be 'King of the Jews'. If this had been missing from any of the accounts then there may have been a possible concern for a contradiction here; but this is not the case. (Archer 1982:345-346).
- 59) Did Herod want to kill John the Baptist (Matthew 14:5), or was it his wife Herodias (Mark 6:20)?** (Category: misunderstood the author's intent)
- a) When we look at the whole story we see that Matthew 14:1-11 and Mark 6:14-29, as far as I have been able to see nowhere contradict each other. This seems to be a similarly weak attempt to find a contradiction within the Bible. In both passages Herod has John imprisoned because of his wife Herodias. Therefore it is the underlying influence of Herodias on Herod that is the important factor in John's beheading. Mark's account is more detailed than Matthew's, whose Gospel is thought to have been written later, because Matthew does not want to waste time trampling old ground when it is already contained within Mark's Gospel. Notice also that Mark does not anywhere state that Herod did not want to kill John, but does say that Herod was afraid of him, because of John's righteousness and holiness, and, as Matthew adds, the factor of John's influence over the people.
- 60) Was the tenth disciple of Jesus in the list of twelve Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19) or Judas, son of James (Luke 6:12-16)?** (Category: misunderstood the historical context)

- a) Both can be correct. It was not unusual for people of this time to use more than one name. Simon, or Cephas was also called Peter (Mark 3:16), and Saul was also called Paul (Acts 13:9). In neither case is there a suggestion that either was used exclusively before changing to the other. Their two names were interchangeable.

61) Was the man Jesus saw sitting at the tax collector's office whom he called to be his disciple named Matthew (Matthew 9:9) or Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27)? (Category: misunderstood the historical context)

- a) The answer to this question is exactly the same as the previous one in that both scriptures are correct. Matthew was also called Levi, as the scriptures here attest.

62) Was Jesus crucified on the daytime after the Passover meal (Mark 14:12-17) or the daytime before the Passover meal (John 13:1, 30, 29; 18:28; 19:14)? (Category: misunderstood the historical context)

- a) Jesus was crucified on the daytime before the Passover meal. The reason why Mark seems to say it was after is one of culture and contextualising. The evidence from the Gospels that Jesus died on the eve of the Passover, when the Passover meal would be eaten after sunset, is very solid. Before we delve (albeit briefly) into this issue, it is worth noting that Mark 14 records that Jesus does not eat the Passover with his disciples. Luke 14:12 says it was "the Feast of Unleavened Bread", which is also called "Passover". As the name states, part of the Passover meal was to eat bread without yeast. It is a commandment which Jewish people keep even today for the meal, for God makes it extremely clear, "eat bread without yeast and whoever eats bread with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel. Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread ". See also Exodus 12:1-20. The Greek word for "unleavened bread" is 'azymos'. This is the word used by Mark in "the Feast of Unleavened Bread", chapter 14 verse 12. The Greek word for normal bread (with yeast) is 'artos'. All the Gospel writers, including Mark, agree that in this last meal with his disciples the bread they ate was artos, in other words a bread with yeast. "While they were eating, Jesus took bread [artos], gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying Take it; this is my body." Mark 14:22. It is highly probably therefore that this meal was not a Passover meal. The use of the different words in the same passage strongly suggests this. For it would be unthinkable to them to eat something that God had commanded them not to eat (bread with yeast - artos), and not to eat something that they were commanded to eat (unleavened bread - azymos). Therefore, as this is true, what does Mark mean in verses 12-17? Firstly, we read, "when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb". Exodus 20:1-8 says that this must happen on the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nisan. However, there was dispute as to when this day was, due to the debate on separate calendars which were used for calculating feast-days. It is possible that separate traditions were in vogue in Jesus life. So, indeed it may have been "customary" to sacrifice the lamb on that day for some, although many, probably most, recognized the Passover as being the next evening. Secondly, the disciples ask Jesus "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" They had no idea that Jesus was going to give his life for the sins of the world like the Passover lamb of Exodus 20 did to save the Israelites from God's wrath upon Egypt. Jesus had explained to them, but they did not grasp it for many reasons, including the hailing of Jesus by the people as Messiah in the Triumphal Entry, which was still 'ringing in their ears'. He does not state that he would eat it with them. He wanted to, but he knew he would not. There is no room for any dogmatic statement that the Passover must be eaten on the same day the room was hired or prepared. Indeed, Jewish people, because of Exodus 12, thoroughly prepared their houses for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Thirdly, in some ways the Gospels couch the last supper in terms of fulfillment. i.e. Luke 22 records Jesus saying that he had longed to eat "this" Passover meal with them. So, does Luke say it was the Passover meal? It is doubtful, due to the same use of artos and azymos, amongst other reasons. Jesus did make this last supper a sort of Passover meal (but not the real one). He wanted to have this special fellowship with his disciples, his friends, being painfully aware of the agony he would go through, only a few hours later. He also wanted to show his disciples that the Passover spoke of him; that he was the sacrifice that would bring in the New Covenant God promised (see questions #64 and #34) just like the lambs that was killed 1500 years earlier to save the people of Israel from God's wrath. He illustrated through the meal that he is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" as John the Baptist called Jesus (John 1:29). He wanted to eat it with them for he says, "I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the Kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16). His coming

- death was its fulfillment, "For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7). If this understanding is correct (one of two feasible explanations I opted for due to my current research), then there is no contradiction. Jesus died before the Passover meal.
- 63) Did Jesus move away three times (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42) or once (Luke 22:39-46) from his disciples to pray?** (Category: the texts are compatible with a little thought)
- a) Matthew 26:36-46 and Mark 14:32-42, show three but Luke 22:39-46 only speaks of one. However once again there is no contradiction once you realize that the three passages are complementary. Note that the Luke passage nowhere states that Jesus did not leave the disciples three times to go and pray. Because he does not mention all three times does not imply that Jesus did not do so.
- 64) When Jesus went away to pray, were the words in his two prayers the same (Mark 14:39) or different (Matthew 26:42)?** (Category: imposes his own agenda)
- a) Nowhere in this verse does Mark say that Jesus prayed the same words as the previous prayer, but what he does imply by the words used in the sentence is that the gist of the prayer is the same as before, as the passage in Matthew shows. When we compare the first two prayers in Matthew (vss. 39 and 42) we see that they are essentially the same prayer, though not exactly the same wording. Then in verse 44 Matthew says that Christ prayed yet again "saying the same thing!"
- 65) Did the centurion say that Jesus was innocent (Luke 23:47), or that he was the Son of God (Mark 15:39)?** (Category: the texts are compatible with a little thought)
- a) The question being forwarded is what the centurion at the cross said when Jesus died. The two passages quoted are Mark 15:39 and Luke 23:47. However as has been said before with other apparent contradictions these passages are not contradictory but complementary. Matthew 27:54 and Mark 15:39 agree that the centurion exclaimed that Jesus, "was the Son of God!". Luke 23:47 however mentions that the centurion refers to Jesus as, "a righteous man." The centurion obviously said both. (Archer 1982:346-347).
- 66) Did Jesus say "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" in Hebrew (Matthew 27:46) or in Aramaic (Mark 15:34)?** (Category: misunderstood the Hebrew usage)
- a) Mark 15:34 is probably the most quoted Aramaism in the New Testament, being "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabakthani." However, it is doubtful that Jesus spoke in the language that Mark records them in. The reason is simple; the people hearing Jesus' words thought he was calling Elijah (Matthew 27:47 and Mark 15:35-36). In order for the onlookers to have made this mistake, Jesus would have to have cried "Eli, Eli," not "Eloi, Eloi." Why? Because in Hebrew Eli can be either "My God" or the shortened form of Eliyahu which is Hebrew for Elijah. However, in Aramaic Eloi can be only "My God." It is also worth noting that lama ("why") is the same word in both languages, and sabak is a verb which is found not only in Aramaic, but also in Mishnaic Hebrew. Therefore Jesus probably spoke it in Hebrew. Why therefore is it recorded in Aramaic as well? Jesus was part of a multilingual society. He most probably spoke Greek (the common language of Greece and Rome), Aramaic (the common language of the Ancient Near East) and Hebrew, the sacred tongue of Judaism, which had been revived in the form of Mishnaic Hebrew in Second Temple times. Hebrew and Aramaic are closely related Semitic languages. That Hebrew and Aramaic terms show up in the Gospels is, therefore, not at all surprising. That one Gospel writer records it in Hebrew and another in extremely similar Aramaic is no problem to Christians, nor is it a criticism of the Bible. (Bivin/Blizzard 1994:10)
- 67) Were the last words that Jesus spook "Father into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46), or "It is finished" (John 19:30)?** (Category: the texts are compatible with a little thought)
- a) This does not show a contradiction any more than two witnesses to an accident at an intersection will come up with two different scenarios of that accident, depending on where they stood. Neither witness would be incorrect, as they describe the event from a different perspective. Luke was not a witness to the event, and so is dependent on those who were there. John was a witness. What they are both relating, however, is that at the end Jesus gave himself up to death. It could be said that Luke used the last words that he felt were necessary for his gospel account, which concentrated on the humanity of Christ (noted in the earlier question), while John, as well as quoting the last words of Jesus, was interested in the fulfillment of the salvific message, and so quoted the last phrase "it is finished".

- 68) Did the Capernaum centurion come personally to ask Jesus to heal his slave (Matthew 8:5), or did he send elders of the Jews and his friends (Luke 7:3,6)?** (Category: the text is compatible with a little thought & misunderstood the author's intent)
- a) This is not a contradiction but rather a misunderstanding of sequence, as well as a misunderstanding of what the authors intended. The centurion initially delivered his message to Jesus via the elders of the Jews. It is also possible that he came personally to Jesus after he had sent the elders to Jesus. Matthew mentions the centurion because he was the one in need, while Luke mentions the efforts of the Jewish elders because they were the ones who made the initial contact. We know of other instances where the deed which a person tells others to do is in actuality done through him. A good example is the baptism done by the disciple's of Jesus, yet it was said that Jesus baptized (John 4:1-2).
- 69) Did Adam die the same day (Genesis 2:17) or did he continue to live to the age of 930 years (Genesis 5:5)?** (Category: misunderstood how God works in history)
- a) The Scriptures describe death in three ways; 1) Physical death which ends our life on earth, 2) spiritual death which is separation from God, and 3) eternal death in hell. The death spoken of in Genesis 2:17 is the second death mentioned in our list, that of complete separation from God, while the death mentioned in Genesis 5:5 is the first death, a physical death which ends our present life.
- 70) Did God decide that the lifespan of humans was to be only 120 years (Genesis 6:3), or longer (Genesis 11:12-16)?** (Category: misread the text)
- a) In Genesis 6:3 we read, "Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.'" This is contrasted with ages of people who lived longer than 120 years in Genesis 11:12-16. However this is based, I presume on a misreading or misunderstanding of the text. The hundred and twenty years spoken of by God in Genesis 6:3 cannot mean the life span of human beings as you do find people older than that mentioned more or less straight away a few Chapters on into the book of Genesis (including Noah himself). The more likely meaning is that the Flood that God had warned Noah about doesn't happen until 120 years after the initial warning to Noah. This is brought out further in 1 Peter 3:20 where we read, "God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built." Therefore looking at the context of the Genesis 6:3 passage it would agree with what we find in chapter 11 of the same book. (Geisler/Howe 1992:41)
- 71) Apart from Jesus there was no-one else (John 3:13) or there were others (2 Kings 2:11) who ascended to heaven?** (Category: misunderstood the wording)
- a) There were others who went to heaven without dying, such as Elijah and Enoch (Genesis 5:24). In John 3:13 Jesus is setting forth his superior knowledge of heavenly things. Essentially what he is saying, "no other human being can speak from first hand knowledge about these things, as I can, since I came down from heaven." he is claiming that no one has ascended to heaven to bring down the message that he brought. In no way is he denying that anyone else is in heaven, such as Elijah and Enoch. Rather, Jesus is simply claiming that no one on earth has gone to heaven and returned with a message such as he offered to them.
- 72) Was the high priest Abiathar (Mark 2:26), or Ahimelech (1 Samuel 21:1; 22:20) when David went into the house of God and ate the consecrated bread?** (Category: misunderstood the Hebrew usage & misunderstood the historical context)
- a) Jesus states that the event happened 'in the days of Abiathar the high priest' and yet we know from 1 Samuel that Abiathar was not actually the high priest at that time; it was his father, Ahimelech. If we were to introduce an anecdote by saying, 'When king David was a shepherd-boy...', it would not be incorrect, even though David was not king at that time. In the same way, Abiathar was soon to be high priest and this is what he is most remembered for, hence he is designated by this title. Moreover, the event certainly did happen 'in the days of Abiathar', as he was alive and present during the incident. We know from 1 Samuel 22:20 that he narrowly escaped when his father's whole family and their town was destroyed by Saul's men. Therefore, Jesus' statement is quite acceptable. (Archer 1994:362)
- 73) Was Jesus' body wrapped in spices before burial in accordance with Jewish burial customs (John 19:39-40), or did the women come and administer the spices later (Mark 16:1)?** (Category: the texts are compatible with a little thought)

- a) John 19:39,40 clearly states that Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped the body in 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes, along with strips of linen. We also know from the synoptic writers that the body was placed in a large shroud. There need be no contradiction here. The fact that the synoptics do not mention the spices during the burial does not mean that they were not used. If Mark 16:1 is taken to mean that the women were hoping to do the whole burial process themselves, they would need the strips of linen as well, which are not mentioned. It is likely that they simply wished to perform their last act of devotion to their master by adding extra spices to those used by Joseph.

74) Did the women buy the spices after (Mark 16:1) or before the Sabbath (Luke 23:55 to 24:1)?

(Category: the texts are compatible with a little thought)

- a) Several details in the accounts of the resurrection suggest that there were in fact two groups of women on their way to the tomb, planning to meet each other there. See question 86 for more details of these two groups. Now it becomes clear that Mary Magdalene and her group bought their spices after the Sabbath, as recorded by Mark 16:1. On the other hand, Joanna and her group bought their spices before the Sabbath, as recorded by Luke 23:56. It is significant that Joanna is mentioned only by Luke, thereby strengthening the proposition that it was her group mentioned by him in the resurrection account.

75) Did the women visit the tomb "toward the dawn" (Matthew 28:1), or "When the sun had risen" (Mark 16:2)? (Category: the texts are compatible with a little thought)

A brief look at the four passages concerned will clear up any misunderstanding.

- Matthew 28:1: 'At dawn...went to look at the tomb'.
- Mark 16:2 'Very early...just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb'.
- Luke 24:1: 'Very early in the morning...went to the tomb'.
- John 20:1: 'Early...while it was still dark...went to the tomb'.

Thus we see that the four accounts are easily compatible in this respect. It is not even necessary for this point to remember that there were two groups of women, as the harmony is quite simple. From Luke we understand that it was very early when the women set off for the tomb. From Matthew we see that the sun was just dawning, yet John makes it clear that it had not yet done so fully: The darkness was on its way out but had not yet gone. Mark's statement that the sun had risen comes later, when they were on their way. It is perfectly reasonable to assume that the sun had time to rise during their journey across Jerusalem.

75) Did the women go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55-24:1), or to see the tomb (Matthew 28:1), or for no reason (John 20:1)? (Category: the texts are compatible with a little thought)

- a) This answer links in with number 81 above. We know that they went to the tomb in order to put further spices on Jesus' body, as Luke and Mark tell us. The fact that Matthew and John do not give a specific reason does not mean that there was not one. They were going to put on spices, whether or not the gospel authors all mention it. We would not expect every detail to be included in all the accounts, otherwise there would be no need for four of them!

76) When the women arrived at the tomb, was the stone "rolled back" (Mark 16:4), "rolled away" (Luke 24:2), "taken away" (John 20:1), or did they see an angel do it (Matthew 28:1-6)?(Category: misread the text)

- a) Matthew does not say that the women saw the angel roll the stone back. This accusation is indeed trivial. After documenting the women setting off for the tomb, Matthew relates the earthquake, which happened while they were still on their way. Verse 2 begins by saying, 'There was a violent earthquake', the Greek of which carries the sense of, 'now there had been a violent earthquake'. When the women speak to the angel in verse 5, we understand from Mark 16:5 that they had approached the tomb and gone inside, where he was sitting on the ledge where Jesus' body had been. Therefore, the answer to this question is that the stone was rolled away when they arrived: there is no contradiction.

- 77) What number of angels and also who was told of Jesus' resurrection. In Matthew 16:2; 28:7, Mark 16:5-6 and Luke 24:4-5, 23, the women were told what happened to Jesus' body, while in John 20:2 Mary was not told.** (Category: the texts are compatible with a little thought)
- a) The angels told the women that Jesus had risen from the dead. Matthew, Mark and Luke are all clear on this. The apparent discrepancy regarding the number of angels is cleared up when we realize that there were two groups of women. Mary Magdalene and her group probably set out from the house of John Mark, where the Last Supper had been held. Joanna and some other unnamed women, on the other hand, probably set out from Herod's residence, in a different part of the city. Joanna was the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household (Luke 8:3) and it is therefore highly probable that she and her companions set out from the royal residence. With this in mind, it is clear that the first angel (who rolled away the stone and told Mary and Salome where Jesus was) had disappeared by the time Joanna and her companions arrived. When they got there (Luke 24:3-8), two angels appeared and told them the good news, after which they hurried off to tell the apostles. In Luke 24:10, all the women are mentioned together, as they all went to the apostles in the end. We are now in a position to see why Mary Magdalene did not see the angels. John 20:1 tells us that Mary came to the tomb and we know from the other accounts that Salome and another Mary were with her. As soon as she saw the stone rolled away, she ran to tell the apostles, assuming that Jesus had been taken away. The other Mary and Salome, on the other hand, satisfied their curiosity by looking inside the tomb, where they found the angel who told them what had happened. So we see that the angels did inform the women, but that Mary Magdalene ran back before she had chance to meet them.
- 78) Did Mary Magdalene first meet the resurrected Jesus during her first visit (Matthew 28:9) or on her second visit (John 20:11-17)? And how did she react?** (Category: the texts are compatible with a little thought)
- a) We have established in the last answer that Mary Magdalene ran back to the apostles as soon as she saw the stone had been rolled away. Therefore, when Matthew 28:9 records Jesus meeting them, she was not there. In fact, we understand from Mark 16:9 that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, which was after she, Peter and John had returned to the tomb the first time (John 20:1-18). Here, we see that Peter and John saw the tomb and went home, leaving Mary weeping by the entrance. From here, she saw the two angels inside the tomb and then met Jesus himself. As all this happened before Jesus appeared to the other women, it appears that there was some delay in them reaching the apostles. We may understand what happened by comparing the complementary accounts. Matthew 28:8 tells us that the women (Mary the mother of James and Salome) ran away 'afraid yet filled with joy...to tell his disciples'. It appears that their fear initially got the better of them, for they 'said nothing to anyone' (Mark 16:8). It was at this time that Jesus suddenly met them (Matthew 28:9,10). Here, he calmed their fears and told them once more to go and tell the apostles. There are several apparent problems in the harmonization of the resurrection accounts, a few of which have been touched on here. It has not been appropriate to attempt a full harmonization in this short paper, as we have been answering specific points. A complete harmonization has been commendably attempted by John Wenham in 'Easter Enigma' (most recent edition 1996, Paternoster Press). Anyone with further questions is invited to go this book. It must be admitted that we have in certain places followed explanations or interpretations that are not specifically stated in the text. This is entirely permissible, as the explanations must merely be plausible. It is clear that the gospel authors are writing from different points of view, adding and leaving out different details. This is entirely to be expected from four authors writing independently. Far from casting doubt on their accounts, it gives added credibility, as those details which at first appear to be in conflict can be resolved with some thought, yet are free from the hallmarks of obvious collusion, either by the original authors or any subsequent editors.
- 79) Did Jesus instruct his disciples to wait for him in Galilee (Matthew 28:10), or that he was ascending to his Father and God (John 20:17)?** (Category: misread the text)
- a) The two passages occur at different times on the same day and there is no reason to believe that Jesus would give his disciples only one instruction. The two passages, in fact, are complementary not contradictory. This is because the two passages do not refer to the same point in time. Matthew 28:10 speaks of the group of women encountering the risen Jesus on their way back to tell the disciples of what they had found. An empty tomb!? And then receiving the first set of instructions from him to tell the disciples. The second passage from John 20:17 occurs some time after the first

passage, (to understand the time framework read from the beginning of this Chapter) and takes place when Mary is by herself at the tomb grieving out of bewilderment, due to the events unraveling around about her. She sees Jesus and he gives her another set of instructions to pass on to the disciples.

80) Upon Jesus' instructions, did the disciples return to Galilee immediately (Matthew 28:17), or after at least 40 days (Luke 24:33, 49; Acts 1:3-4)? (Category: didn't read the entire text and misquoted the text)

a) This supposed contradiction asks when the disciples returned to Galilee after the crucifixion. It is argued from Matthew 28:17 that they returned immediately, and from Luke 24:33 and 49, and Acts 1:4 that it was after at least 40 days. However both of these assumptions are wrong. It would appear that Jesus appeared to them many times; sometimes individually, sometimes in groups, and as the whole group gathered together, and also at least to Paul and Stephen after the Ascension (see 1 Corinthians 15:5-8, and Acts 7:55-56). He appeared in Galilee and Jerusalem and other places. Matthew 28:16-20 is a summary of all the appearances of Christ, and it is for this reason that it is not advisable to overstress chronology in this account, as Shabbir seems to have done. The second argument in this seeming contradiction is an even weaker argument than the one I have responded to above. This is because Shabbir has not fully quoted Acts 1:4 which says; 'On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about."' Now the author of Acts, Luke in this passage does not specify when Jesus said this. However in his gospel he does the same thing as Matthew and groups together all the appearances so again it would be unwise to read too much chronologically into the passage of Luke 24:36-49. However it is apparent from the Gospels of Matthew and John that some of the disciples at least did go to Galilee and encounter Jesus there; presumably after the first encounter in Jerusalem and certainly before the end of the forty day period before Christ's Ascension into Heaven.

81) Did the Midianites sell Joseph "to the Ishmaelites" (Genesis 37:28), or to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh (Genesis 37:36), and did the Ishmaelites bring Joseph to Egypt (Genesis 37:28), or was it the Midianites (Genesis 37:36), or was it Joseph's brothers (Genesis 45:4)? (Category: misunderstood the historical context)

a) This apparent contradiction is a very strange one because it shows a clear misunderstanding of the text in Genesis 37:25-36. The question is asked, 'To whom did the Midianites sell Joseph?' Verse 28 is used to say the Ishmaelites, and verse 36 Potiphar. The traveling merchants were comprised of Ishmaelite and Midianite merchants who bought Joseph from his brothers, and they in turn sold him to Potiphar in Egypt. The words Ishmaelite and Midianite are used interchangeably. This would seem obvious once you read verses 27 and 28 together. A clearer usage for these two names can also be found in Judges 8:24.

82) Does God change his mind (Genesis 6:7; Exodus 32:14; 1 Samuel 15:10-11, 35), or does he not change his mind (1 Samuel 15:29)? (Category: misunderstood how God works in history & misunderstood the Hebrew usage)

a) This "contradiction" generally appears only in older English translations of the Biblical manuscripts. The accusation arises from translation difficulties and is solved by looking at the context of the event. God knew that Saul would fail in his duty as King of Israel. Nevertheless, God allowed Saul to be king and used him greatly to do His will. Saul was highly effective as leader of Israel, in stirring his people to have courage and take pride in their nation, and in coping with Israel's enemies during times of war. However, God made it clear long before this time (Genesis 49:8-10) that he would establish the kings that would reign over Israel, from the tribe of Judah. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin. Therefore there was no doubt that Saul or his descendants were not God's permanent choice to sit on the throne of Israel. His successor David, however, was from the tribe of Judah, and his line was to continue. Therefore God, who knows all things, did not 'change his mind' about Saul, for he knew Saul would turn away from Him and that the throne would be given to another. The word in Hebrew that is used to express what God thought and how God felt concerning the turning of Saul from Him is "niham" which is rendered "repent" in the above. However, as is common in languages, it can mean more than one thing. For example, English has only one word for "love." Greek has at least 4 and Hebrew has more. A Hebrew or Greek word for love cannot always simply be translated "love" in English if more of the original meaning is to be retained. This is a problem that translators have. (Archer 1994)

83) Did David (1 Samuel 17:23, 50) or Elhanan (2 Samuel 21:19) kill Goliath? (Category: copyist error)

a) The discrepancy as to who killed Goliath (David or Elhanan) was caused by copyist or scribal error, which can be seen clearly. The text of 2 Samuel 21:19 reads as follows, "In another battle with the Philistines at Gob, Elhanan son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod." As this stands in the Hebrew Masoretic text, this is a certainly a clear contradiction to 1 Samuel and its account of David's slaying of Goliath. However, there is a very simple and apparent reason for this contradiction, as in the parallel passage of 1 Chronicles 20:5 shows. It describes the episode as follows: "In another battle with the Philistines, Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod." When the Hebrew for these sentences is examined, the reason for the contradiction becomes quite obvious and the latter 1 Chronicles is seen to be the true and correct reading. This is not simply because we know David killed Goliath, but also because of the language. When the scribe was duplicating the earlier manuscript, it must have been blurred or damaged at this particular verse in 2 Samuel. The result was that he made two or three mistakes (see Gleason L. Archer, Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, page 179):

8. The sign of the direct object in 1 Chronicles was '-t̄ which comes just before "Lahmi" in the sentence order. The scribe mistook it for b-t̄ or b-y-t̄ ("Beth") and thus got BJT hal-Lahmi ("the Bethlehemite") out of it.
9. He misread the word for "brother" ('-h , the h having a dot underneath it) as the sign of the direct object ('-t̄) right before g-l-y-t̄ ("Goliath"). Therefore he made "Goliath" the object of "killed" instead of "brother" of Goliath, as in 1 Chronicles.
10. The copyist misplaced the word for "weavers" ('-r-g-ym) so as to put it right after "Elhanan" as his family name (ben Y-'-r-y-'-r--g-ym, ben ya^arey 'or^e-gim, "the son of the forest of weavers", a most improbable name for anyone's father). In Chronicles the or^e-gim ("weavers") comes straight after m^cn'r ("a beam of") - thus making perfectly good sense.

To conclude: the 2 Samuel passage is an entirely traceable error on the part of the copyist in the original wording, which has been preserved in 1 Chronicles 20:5. David killed Goliath. This testifies to the honesty and openness of the scribes and translators (both Jewish and Christian). Although it would be easy to change this recognized error, this has not been done in favour of remaining true to the manuscripts. Although it leaves the passage open to shallow criticism as Shabbir Ally has shown, it is criticism which we are not afraid of. An excellent example of human copying error resulting from the degeneration of papyrus.

84) Did Saul take his own sword and fall upon it (1 Samuel 31:4-6), or did an Amalekite kill him (2 Samuel 1:1-16)? (Category: misread the text)

a) It should be noted that the writer of 1 & 2 Samuel does not place any value on the Amalekite's story. Thus, in all reality it was Saul who killed himself, though it was the Amalekite who took credit for the killing. The writer relates how Saul died and then narrates what the Amalekite said. The Amalekite's statement that he 'happened to be on Mount Gilboa' (2 Samuel 1:6) may not be an innocent one. He had quite possibly come to loot the dead bodies. In any case, he certainly got there before the Philistines, who did not find Saul's body until the next day (1 Samuel 31:8). We have David's own testimony that the Amalekite thought he was bringing good news of Saul's death (2 Samuel 4:10). It is likely, therefore, that he came upon Saul's dead body, took his crown and bracelet and made up the story of Saul's death in order that David might reward him for defeating his enemy. The Amalekite's evil plan, however, backfired dramatically on him.

85) Is it that everyone sins (1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8-10), or do some not sin (1 John 3:1, 8-9; 4:7; 5:1)? (Category: misunderstood the Greek usage & Imposes his own agenda)

a) This apparent contradiction asks: 'Does every man sin?' Then a number of Old Testament passages that declare this are listed followed by one New Testament passage from 1 John 1:8-10: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he

is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives." It is true that a person who is born of God should not habitually practice sin (James 2:14ff), but that is not to say that they will not occasionally fall into sin, as we live in a sinful world and impinged by it. The last of the verses quoted is from 1 John 3:9 which says: "No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God." The Scriptures clearly teach that all men have sinned except for one, the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore we have no quarrel with Shabbir on this point. As to Shabbir's second point I am glad he has come to realize that Christians are children of God therefore we have no quarrel with him on this subject.

- 86) Are we to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), or are we to bear only our own burdens (Galatians 6:5)?** (Category: misread the text)
- a) There is no contradiction here at all. This is not a case of 'either/or' but of 'both/and'. When you read Galatians 6:1-5 properly you will notice that believers are asked to help each other in times of need, difficulty or temptation; but they are also called to account for their own actions. There is no difficulty or contradiction in this, as the two are mutually inclusive.
- 87) Did Jesus appear to twelve disciples after his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5), or was it to eleven (Matthew 27:3-5; 28:16; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:9,33; Acts 1:9-26)?** (Category: misread the text)
- a) There is no contradiction once you notice how the words are being used. In all the references given for eleven disciples, the point of the narrative account is to be accurate at that particular moment of time being spoken of. After the death of Judas there were only eleven disciples, and this remained so until Matthias was chosen to take Judas' place. In 1 Corinthians 15:5 the generic term 'the Twelve' is therefore used for the disciples because Matthias is also counted within the Twelve, since he also witnessed the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as the passage pointed out by Shabbir records in Acts 1:21-22.
- 88) Did Jesus go immediately to the desert after his baptism (Mark 1:12-13), or did he first go to Galilee, see disciples, and attend a wedding (John 1:35, 43; 2:1-11)?** (Category: misread the text)
- a) This apparent contradiction asks: 'Where was Jesus three days after his baptism?' Mark 1:12-13 says he went to the wilderness for forty days. But John 'appears' to have Jesus the next day at Bethany, the second day at Galilee and the third at Cana (John 1:35; 1:43; 2:1-11), unless you go back and read the entire text starting from John 1:19. The explanation about the baptism of Jesus in John's Gospel is given by John the Baptist himself. It was "John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was" (vs. 19). It is he who is referring to the event of the baptism in the past. If there is any doubt look at the past tense used by John when he sees Jesus coming towards him in verses 29-30 and 32. While watching Jesus he relates to those who were listening the event of the baptism and its significance. There is no reason to believe that the baptism was actually taking place at the time John was speaking, and therefore no reason to imply that this passage contradicts that of Mark's Gospel.
- 89) Did Joseph flee with the baby Jesus to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-23), or did he calmly present him at the temple in Jerusalem and return to Galilee (Luke 2:21-40)?** (Category: misunderstood the historical context)
- a) These are complementary accounts of Jesus' early life, and not contradictory at all. It is clear that it would take some time for Herod to realize that he had been outsmarted by the magi. Matthew's Gospel says that he killed all the baby boys that were two years old and under in Bethlehem and its vicinity. That would be enough time to allow Joseph and Mary the opportunity to do their rituals at the temple in Jerusalem and then return to Nazareth in Galilee, from where they went to Egypt, and then returned after the death of Herod
- 90) When Jesus walked on the water, did his disciples worship him (Matthew 14:33), or were they utterly astounded due to their hardened hearts (Mark 6:51-52)?** (Category: didn't read the entire text)
- a) This seeming contradiction asks: 'When Jesus walked on water how did the disciples respond?' Matthew 14:33 says they worshiped him. Mark 6:51-52 says that they were astounded and hadn't understood from the previous miracle he had done when he fed the 5000. This again is not a contradiction but two complementary passages. If Shabbir had read the entire passage in Matthew he would have seen that both the Matthew account (verses 26-28) and the Mark account mention

that the disciples had initially been astounded, thinking he was a ghost. This was because they had not understood from the previous miracle who he was. But after the initial shock had worn off the Matthew account then explains that they worshipped him.

Conclusion:

It must be admitted that we have in certain places followed explanations or interpretations that are not specifically stated in the text. This is entirely permissible, as the explanations must merely be plausible. It is clear that the gospel authors are writing from different points of view, adding and leaving out different details. This is entirely to be expected when four authors write independently. Far from casting doubt on their accounts, it gives added credibility, as those details which at first appear to be in conflict can be resolved with some thought, yet are free from the hallmarks of obvious collusion, either by the original authors or any subsequent editors.

This testifies to the honesty and openness of the scribes and translators (both Jewish and Christian). Although it would be easy to change this recognized error, this has not been done in favour of remaining true to the manuscripts. Although it leaves the passage open to shallow criticism as Shabbir Ally has shown, it is criticism which we are not afraid of.

11. "God is not the author of confusion..." (1 Corinthians 14:33)

True, God is not the author of confusion. There is very little that is confusing in the Bible. When we understand all the original readings and the context behind them, the confusion virtually disappears. Of course we need scholarship to understand everything in there, as we are 2,000 - 3,500 years and a translation removed from the original hearers.

12. "...A house divided against itself falls" (Luke 11:17)

The Bible is not divided against itself. Jesus was talking about a major division, i.e. Satan destroying his own demons. This is far removed from the Bible. The Bible contains thousands of pages and all the Biblical "problems" number very few! That indeed is remarkable!

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