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Jesus on Trial (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In the second part of his reflection on the trial of Jesus, Steve Gregg explores the theme of false testimonies and how they can be used to twist the truth. He also compares the different accounts of the trial and the events surrounding Judas' death and the purchase of a field. Gregg suggests that the quote from Jeremiah in Matthew 27 may have been mixed up with another prophet's quote, and proposes that the naming of the field may have had multiple reasons. Overall, Gregg offers insights into the complexity and various interpretations of these biblical passages.

Transcript

...came awfully close to telling the truth about what Jesus would do, because in 70 AD, of course, the Bible indicates that Jesus did have his vengeance on the temple, and he did destroy that temple made with hands. And the New Testament teaches also that Jesus is building a temple, which is the church, but it's a building not made with hands, it's spiritual. And so the theology of the guy's false testimony actually turned out to be a very good, enlightened, true description of what Jesus did end up doing.

And I say this is either a coincidence, that this guy was just making this up out of whole cloth and happened to hit it right as to what Jesus was going to end up doing, although Jesus hadn't said it, or else Jesus had on occasions not recorded in the Gospels, said something about some indication that he was going to build some kind of a temple without hands. The Gospels don't record him saying it. Someone may have heard him say something about a temple made without hands that he intended to build, and they may have connected that with his previous statement about destroying the physical temple, and they may have somehow managed to confuse that and put those two things together.

We don't know. Jesus may not have said a word about it. The guy may have just accidentally hit on it.

But interestingly, in Acts chapter 6, when Stephen was standing trial for what he had said, and he was accused of having blasphemed Moses and the temple, it says in Acts 6,

13, and this is when Stephen was being accused, and it says, in verse 11 actually, Then they secretly induced men to say, which apparently means they paid witnesses probably to give this testimony, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God. And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him to the council, the Sanhedrin. They also set up false witnesses who said, This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law.

For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, meaning the temple, and change the customs which Moses delivered to us. And all who sat in the council looking steadfastly at him saw his face as the face of an angel. Now, in chapter 7, verse 1, Stephen would ask whether this testimony against him was true.

It's interesting Stephen didn't say, No, they're misquoting me altogether. He could have if they were misquoting him. Now, we are told that the witnesses who said these things about him were false witnesses, but what part of their testimony was false? If they were making up their testimony against him completely and every bit of it was a lie, then Stephen would have had a very reasonable way of answering when they said, Are these things true? No, they're not true.

I didn't say any of those things. There is no doubt part of the testimony that was given against him that was rooted in the truth of what he had said and a part that was false that made it a false witness. Just like the false witnesses who spoke against Jesus had cut a tinge of what Jesus really had said and then twisted it to their own advantage.

I am of the impression that Stephen probably did say that Jesus of Nazareth will come and destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us. We don't have any record of Stephen having said that, but if he had said it, it would have been true. And he doesn't deny anywhere in his defense, which is very lengthy in chapter 7, he doesn't deny that he said such things.

The only thing he denies in his testimony in chapter 7 is that those things are blasphemous. And that would possibly be the part of the testimony that was false and calls them false witnesses. They said that he had spoken blasphemous words against the holy place and the law.

Well, his words were not blasphemous. He may well have said that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy this place and change the laws of Moses. Jesus did both of those things.

And if Stephen hadn't said it, then these false witnesses again tripped up accidentally and came up with the right information. Even though Stephen hadn't said it, they got good doctrine just out of their imaginations. Because Jesus did, in fact, both of those things.

But my understanding is that Stephen had said those very words, but the witnesses were false in trying to put a spin on it to make it sound like blasphemy. There's nothing blasphemous about saying that. And yet they said he had said blasphemous things continuously against the temple.

And so Stephen, in his defense, nowhere denies that he said the things that he's quoted as saying by his witnesses. He could have denied it, and that would have at least been a sensible thing for him to do. But instead, he defends himself on the grounds that to speak against the temple is not blasphemy.

And that, in fact, to idolize the temple, which the Sanhedrin themselves did, was blasphemy, or it was at least idolatry. Because the temple is not God. And to speak against the temple is not to speak against God.

And his entire defense is to point out that God and the temple are two separate entities. And that the Jews, in fact, have become guilty of idolizing the temple, a sin in itself. And that his words about the destruction of the temple would not properly be construed as blasphemy at all against God.

Because he points out that God was in Ur of the Chaldees with Abraham. There was no temple there, but God was there. Later, he points out that God was with the Egyptian escapees in the Exodus, and that he was with them in the wilderness.

He says God was with them there in the wilderness. Well, they didn't have a temple there. Even earlier than that, I skipped over something.

He says that God was with Joseph in Egypt. When Joseph was in Egypt, God was with him. The point that he's making is that God has been with his people whether or not there have ever been a temple.

And then he goes on to say that God did ordain the making of the tabernacle, but he says it was David who wanted to make a temple. God never asked for a temple. In fact, Stephen quotes God as saying, did I ever ask you to build me a temple? So that Stephen's argument is, God never even, it was never in God's plan necessarily that a temple be built.

That was David's idea. And God, you know, made a concession to him. And so he closes by saying, you guys have always resisted God.

And God is not dwelling in temples made with hands. He quotes Isaiah about that, part of Isaiah. Isaiah 66.1 where God says, Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

What temple, what house will you make for me? For all these things have been and I've made, he says. But then God goes on, Stephen doesn't quote the entire passage, but God goes on in Isaiah 66.2 to say, but to this man will I look. Even to him who is of a poor

and contrite spirit and who trembles at my word.

Certainly not a description of the Sanhedrin. But the point is, Stephen basically, his whole argument suggests, to speak against the temple is not blasphemy. Because the temple and God are separate things and God is not even always associated with the temple.

So that it seems that by answering his accusers, Stephen does not make any attempt to correct their quotation of him. They quote him as saying something. We've heard him say this.

He doesn't deny that he said that. But he does deny that that's blasphemy. And therefore I think that Stephen actually did preach those things.

Because they are true. So there is a sense in which false witnesses sometimes get a piece of the truth and put their own spin on it. And make it sound more condemning than it really is.

Make sure you don't do that. Because I know Christians who do that. Okay, let's go on here.

Verse 62. Matthew 26, 62. And the high priest arose and said to him, Do you answer nothing? What is this that these men testify against you? Well, why should Jesus answer? There hadn't been two witnesses that agreed with each other yet.

He couldn't be condemned on the testimony of one by the law. So he had no reason to have to defend himself. Do you answer nothing? Jesus could have said, well, why should I answer? There's nothing to answer.

There's been no accusation that's held water. But the high priest is getting a little impatient. He says, well, say something.

Hoping that Jesus might say something, at least now that they could condemn him for it. And by the way, another thing that was contrary to the law of the Jews, of the rabbinic laws, was that it was forbidden in the rabbinic law that the council, that in a court of hearing, it was forbidden that the high priest would come and cross-examine the accused in the event that witnesses broke down. That is, if they couldn't find witnesses, the priest was not allowed to go and harangue the accused and try to get him to say something against himself.

That was against the Jewish rabbinic laws. But that's exactly what happened here. The witness did break down.

There weren't two witnesses that agreed with each other. And the high priest does just what he's not supposed to do. He comes down and says, well, say something.

And he tries to get Jesus to say something wrong. And it says Jesus kept silent, in verse 63, initially at least. And the high priest answered and said to him, I adjure you by the living God.

That you tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. At this point, Jesus broke silence. Whether he just got, you know, whether it was a slip of the tongue and he shouldn't have broke silence or not, anyone may judge, but I certainly don't believe he did the wrong thing.

I believe that he was silent initially, but then changed his posture and did speak. Because he was adjured by the living God. That is, the priest put him under oath.

Saying, be honest to God. And the very implications of an oath made in the name of God in the Jewish mind and in that of Jesus, no doubt, were so binding that to honor his father, he would honor an oath in the name of his father. And therefore, having been put under oath to speak the whole truth in the name of God, so help me God, Jesus then broke his silence and said, well, you ask me if I'm the Christ, the Son of God? OK, I'll answer you.

He said, it is as you said. Now, in Mark's gospel, he simply says, I am. In the King James here, he says something like, you have said it.

Or something like that, which is very obscure. You have said it. It's almost like saying, I'm not going to tell.

You say what you want. You're the one who said that, not me. It's unclear in the King James.

But in the New King James, he has him saying, it is as you said. And very clearly, this is the correct meaning of Jesus' answer, since Mark's gospel says, I am. I am the Christ, the Son of the living God.

He is affirming this to be true. But then Jesus doesn't stop there. He doesn't just say yes.

He says, well, you got me talking. Let me go a little further. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter, that is sometime in the future, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Now, of course, these words are typically, in our thinking, applied to the second coming of Christ, although Jesus said that Caiaphas would see this. Or at least some in the council would. Some of his hearers would see the phenomenon that he described.

Now, if he was referring here to his second coming, which is not impossible, then we would have to assume that he means that these people who would, of course, die before his second coming would nonetheless be resurrected just in time to see him coming on

the clouds. That may be correct, although the way I think of the second coming from the passages that talk about it in the epistles, I have the impression that Jesus is going to come in the clouds first, and then he's going to raise the dead to meet him in the air. So whether or not his coming in the clouds will be viewed by the resurrected dead, or whether they will be resurrected after he's come, is perhaps a matter that's not altogether clear.

I seem to read the material the other way, but I do not wish to deny the possibility that this might be a reference to the second coming of Christ. However, he had talked in almost the exact same terms about the Son of Man coming with clouds and the right hand of power and so forth, and a very similar statement was made, as you know, in Matthew 16, 28. Matthew 16, 28, Jesus said, Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Coming in his kingdom is not too much different than at the right hand of power or of authority. He said, Some of you standing here will not taste death until you see the Son of Man coming. And he said to Cyprus, You will see the Son of Man coming with the clouds and at the right hand of power.

The language is not sufficiently different in impact to force us to see Jesus as talking about something in one passage and something else in the other passage. In fact, I think without other scriptures to guide us, and I'm not sure we have others to guide us in this particular decision, but without other scriptures to guide us, it would appear that he's talking about the same thing in both places. Both are found in Matthew.

Both are referring to the Son of Man coming. And both of them refer to people seeing it who were alive at that time. And therefore, I guess I'd have to say I lean to the view that this coming of the Son of Man that Caiaphas was to see was the same coming of the Son of Man that Jesus said some of them staying there would not die before it happened.

And obviously, therefore, it could not, if this is correct, could not be the second coming of Christ and is either a reference to Pentecost, as some have felt, or to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., which is my personal view on the subject. Now, I want to say that back in Matthew 16, 28, when Jesus said some of you staying here won't taste death until you see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom, there are those interpreters who think, there are some who think that's talking about 70 A.D., some think it's talking about the day of Pentecost when Jesus came through his Holy Spirit, and others have felt, in fact, probably the majority of evangelical scholars think that he was talking in that place about the Mount of Transfiguration. Because in all three Gospels that record that prediction, there is an immediate jumping over at least a week's time to record the story of the Transfiguration, where some of them saw his glory on the mountaintop.

However, the statement to Caiaphas cannot be interpreted in terms of him being on the

Mount of Transfiguration, since Caiaphas never was there. Therefore, if both of these statements, the one in Matthew 16, 28, and the one we read up here, if they're both talking about the same coming of the Son of Man, which seems probable, then we would have to eliminate the Mount of Transfiguration as the fulfillment of either of them. And it would again throw us back on the only two reasonable suggestions would be that he's talking about the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, or else, alternately, that he's talking about his coming, figuratively speaking, coming in judgment against Jerusalem.

So those are the two likely possibilities. Of course, as I said, it's not impossible that he's talking about his second coming, his actual second coming, but the connection in the wording between this passage and the one back in Matthew 16, which can't be about the second coming. And generally, what we're told elsewhere about the second coming, I'm not personally encouraged to take that interpretation, although I'm not eager to depart from that interpretation without grounds.

So we don't know for sure which is the fulfillment of what Jesus predicted, but we have no doubt that he was correct in making this prediction. Verse 65, Then the high priest tore his clothes in a mock show of agony at having heard something so dishonoring to God, as what Jesus had just said, saying, This he has spoken blasphemy. What further need do we have of witnesses? He's tired of calling witnesses that don't help anything in his situation.

I guess we don't need any witnesses now. We've heard it with our own ears. We are all witnesses of this.

Look now, you have heard his blasphemy. So he calls on the council themselves to be eyewitnesses of what is taking place. Now, of course, one might say Caiaphas really got what he needed here.

He got more than one witness to hear Jesus say something blasphemous. But where in the law of God does it ever say that for one to call himself the Messiah or for one to call himself the Son of God, is a blasphemous thing? Now, we know there were previous occasions when the Jews took up stones to stone him for blasphemy when he had spoken of himself as the Son of God. But yet, the term Son of God, although we know, of course, Jesus was claiming deity for himself, because the Bible makes it clear that he is deity, but did we not know that he was deity? It would not be necessary to assume that to call oneself the Christ, the Messiah, or to call oneself a Son of God, as you and I can call ourselves without claiming deity for ourselves, that that would be claiming to be God.

So, I mean, they're really, again, even still putting a slant on his words in order to interpret his words as some kind of a maligning of God. That's what blasphemy actually is, is to speak irreverently of God. Well, Jesus hadn't really said anything directly about God, except that he would be sitting at the right hand of power, which could, I guess, be the power of God.

Anyway, they're obviously grasping at straws, even now, but they've got what they think they have, what they need, and therefore he says, what do you think, in verse 6, 6, and they all answered and said, he is deserving of death. Then they spat on his face and beat him, and others struck him with the palms of their hands, saying, prophesy to us, Christ, who is the one who struck you? I believe it's John's Gospel that indicates that the soldiers to whom Jesus was later delivered did these things. However, this passage and the one in Mark indicates that it was the Sanhedrin members themselves that came down and started spitting in his face and hitting him and stuff, which is no doubt quite a provocation for somebody with the power Jesus had at his disposal to vindicate himself, to stand there and take people's spit in his face, and to allow them to strike him, and even to challenge him to prophesy and give their names.

He could have given the names of everyone there and everyone who was absent, but he didn't. He didn't say a word. He was as a lamb before his shearers, his dumb.

It says in Isaiah 53, so he opened not his mouth. Now we have to turn to another passage to get the next chronological portion, and that's Luke 22. In Luke 22, we have the phenomenon that Luke, unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke does not record this hearing that we just read about in the evening with the Sanhedrin.

But he does tell us about a hearing in the morning, the next morning. Now, what he tells us about this hearing the next morning, which is in Luke 22, verses 66 through 71, which is six verses at the end of Luke 22. What he does tell us about this meeting is very similar to what we just read in Matthew about the meeting the night before.

Similar enough, in fact, that one could mistakenly feel that Luke has confused the story and that he feels that the story we just read about didn't happen the night before but actually happened the next morning. Because the details, although not identical, are somewhat similar in Luke when he records the morning meeting and the others that record the night meeting. One reason we can argue that Luke did not make a mistake and that there really were two different meetings, one at night and one in the morning, is because Matthew and Mark both tell us that there were two.

Matthew and Mark describe the first, but they do not omit a reference to the second. They just don't tell us much about it. I have you already turned to Luke, but in Matthew 27.1, it says, When morning came, all the chief priests and elders and the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.

So there was a morning meeting too. Matthew describes in more detail the evening meeting, but it mentions in Matthew that there was a morning meeting also where they got together again and took counsel to find grounds to put him to death. Namely, to find something they could put him to death with Roman approval for.

Because the Jews, though given a fair amount of autonomy by the Romans, declined the

right to exercise capital punishment without Roman permission. Mark also, in chapter 15, verse 1, tells us, Immediately in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and the scribes and the whole council, and they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him to Pilate. So both Matthew and Mark tell us of a second gathering of the Sanhedrin.

Though they give more details about the night one, Luke tells us only about the morning one. So Luke gives us information that's left out of the others. More detail on this morning meeting.

It says in verse 66 of Luke 22, As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led him into their council, saying, If you are the Christ, tell us. Now he had said it last night, but maybe the entire council had not been present. We don't know.

Maybe there were some who had not heard his confession and were doubtful or were unwilling to go along with the majority unless they heard it with their own ears or something. People like Nicodemus or something. So they said, If you are the Christ, tell us.

But he said to them, If I tell you, you will not by any means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer me or let me go. It will do me no good to defend myself.

You're not going to let me go, so why should I bother? Hereafter, the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God. Now of course, that's what he had said the night before, only he had said it in a longer statement. He repeats himself here.

Knowing he's not going to get away anyway and they're going to kill him, he might as well shoot his wad and tell him the truth, even though it will make them angry. So he says, After this, you're going to see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God. Then they all said, Are you then the Son of God? Which is also something he had claimed to be the night before because when he was put under oath the night before by Caiaphas, he was asked, Are you the Christ, the Son of God? And Jesus had said yes to both.

But first they asked him if he's the Christ here and he doesn't say all that clearly. But he calls himself the Son of Man in verse 69 and they said, Are you then the Son of God? And he said to them, You rightly say that I am. Now rightly is inserted in italics, which just means he said, You say that I am.

And again, it makes one wonder whether he was affirming or whether he was just saying, Well, that's what you say. You're not going to get it out of me. Say what you want.

I'm not talking. But since he said something similar in the King James Version in the previous night, which actually did mean, Yes, I am. We might as well assume that he's

affirming what they're saying, Yes, I'm the Son of God.

Verse 71, and they said, What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from his own mouth. Same thing they said the night before, but now probably with more witnesses present. Now, there must have been more than just this conversation that occurred that next morning because it says in Matthew 27, 1 that they gathered to take counsel to put him to death.

In fact, turning back to Matthew 27 and those verses, which is where we need to turn next chronologically, Matthew 27, 1, as I just mentioned, said, When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. We read the verse. I said that applies to what we just read in Luke.

I wanted to point out the expression Matthew chooses for what they did. They all took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. Most commentators feel that Matthew is deliberately alluding to an expression in Psalm 2 that Matthew has chosen his words in describing this gathering based upon what is said in Psalm 2. Because it says in Psalm 2, verse 2, The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, or his Christ, saying, Let us break his bands and send him to the Lord.

So, the psalmist speaks of the rulers as taking counsel together against the Lord and against the Christ. Matthew says they got together and they took counsel against Jesus. Same thought.

Now, whether Matthew was deliberately alluding to that psalm on this occasion or not, it seems very possible that he was. But even if that could not be demonstrated, yet we know the apostles did believe that that psalm applied to this very thing, to Jesus' trial. Because in Acts chapter 4, in Acts chapter 4, verse 24 and following, Acts 4, 24 and following, it says, So when they, the disciples, heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, you are God who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them, who by the mouth of your servant David have said, Why did the nations rage and the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ.

The quote is from Psalm 2 that we just read. Then they interpreted it in verse 27, For truly against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, the anointed one, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever your hand and your purpose determined before to be done. So they quote the psalm and they say, Surely this has happened.

The kings of the earth, Pilate and Herod and the council of the leaders of Israel, they have gathered together and taken counsel against the Christ. So whether or not Matthew is alluding to that psalm, in Matthew 27, when he uses the like language from the psalm,

we do know that that psalm was considered by the apostles to be applicable to this time when Jesus stood before this gathered group of antagonists. Now, in Matthew 27, beginning at verse 3, we have sort of interjected a little thing about Judas' death.

Now, this may be or may not be interjected at its chronological spot. It talks about Judas going to the high priests and giving the money back and so forth. You know, if it was at this point, chronologically, then we would have to view that Judas came to the high priests while Jesus was there.

While Jesus was there on trial, Judas came in and right there in the presence of Jesus threw the money down. Not an impossibility, but it's also possible that as a literary device, Matthew wants to dispense with Judas and get him out of the picture. He's told about what Judas did earlier and he wants to go on and leave such subject matter behind permanently so he can focus on Jesus' death and resurrection.

So, he kind of dismisses Judas from the narrative by inserting in this place the sequel to Judas' betrayal. In any case, it doesn't matter whether it's chronological or not. This is the information that happened.

In verse 3, Matthew 27, 3, Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that he had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned by betraying innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? You see to it. Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and hanged himself.

But the chief priest took the silver pieces and said, It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood. And they took counsel and brought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in. Therefore, that field has been called the field of blood to this day.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me. Now, this particular passage, verses 3 through 10, has almost as many problems as verses. For one thing, it tells us of the death of Judas, which is also recorded in Acts.

Now, I say it has problems. They are not insoluble problems. They are just things that need to be looked at and dealt with.

In Acts chapter 1, in verse 18 and 19, speaking of Judas, in Acts 1, 18 and 19, it says, Now this man, meaning Judas, purchased a field with the wages of iniquity and falling headlong. He burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem, so that the field is called in their own language, Akeldama.

That means the field of blood. Now, with just this little bit, we have several problems. One is that Matthew and the book of Acts both tell us something about the death of Judas, and what became of him.

One of the problems is that Matthew mentions him hanging himself. Acts mentions him falling headlong in the field and bursting open. Neither account mentions what the other account mentions.

They are mutually exclusive in terms of their content, but certainly not mutually exclusive in terms of the possibility of both being true. One tells us he hanged himself. The other mentions his body bursting open, his blood spilling on this particular field.

While this may be an unlikely thing, I mean, you wouldn't expect such a thing to happen, many unexpected things happen. I mean, you wouldn't predict them because of the great unlikelihood of them, but they happen anyway. All kinds of coincidences happen, and there's certainly nothing impossible about the suggestion that Judas hanged himself, and then subsequently he fell forward, maybe the branch from which he hung himself broke, or the rope broke, or they found him later and cut his body down, and in any case, when his body fell, it burst open and splattered all over the place.

While this is not the fate of most people who hang themselves, it's not in any sense implausible or ridiculous to suggest that both accounts tell part of the true story. Furthermore, that is a better suggestion than the suggestion that there really is a misunderstanding between Matthew and Luke, who wrote Acts. That is to say, the other possibility is that Matthew thought Judas died one way, and Luke had a totally different opinion about how Judas died.

The likelihood that men who are as closely associated with each other as Matthew and Luke were, because Matthew and the other 11 were in fellowship from time to time with Paul and his companions, which would include Luke, and these men must have fellowship together on many occasions, and Luke, in writing, both Luke and Acts, suggest that he had the advantage of having talked to the eyewitnesses, which would include Matthew and others, and that was in preparation of his writing. It's obvious that Luke had interviewed people like Matthew and other eyewitnesses before writing the book of Luke or Acts, so the suggestion that somehow Matthew thought it was one way and Luke thought it was another way, and neither knew what the other wrote is very implausible. Much more likely, they both told part of the true story.

But that doesn't end all the difficulties. A further difficulty is in the question of who purchased the field. Because in Acts chapter 1, it says in verse 18, Now this man purchased a field with the money.

That is, Judas purchased the field. In Matthew, however, it says that Judas threw the money down, went out and hanged himself, and then it was the members of the

Sanhedrin not wishing to put the blood money into the treasury. Apparently they had some kind of qualms about that, though they didn't have any qualms about paying for lying witnesses and betrayals and killing people who hadn't done anything wrong, but they certainly didn't want to violate their laws by putting blood money in the treasury.

That they went out and bought the field. It's clearly stated in Matthew that they bought the field. So why does Acts say that Judas bought it? Well, this is a fairly common phenomenon in literature and in the Bible, that an act that is performed on behalf of another is spoken of as if he had done it.

We've pointed out examples of this before. In Matthew 8, we read of the centurion coming to Jesus about his sixth servant. In the parallel in Luke, it tells us that it wasn't the centurion at all.

It was some of his agents, elders of the Jews, that he had sent for this purpose. But in saying that these people came on his behalf, it is also accurate to say he came or he approached Jesus about this. And it's just as if I authorize you to do something on my behalf, and someone later asked if I'd done it, I'd say yes.

Although I didn't do it personally, it was done on my behalf. If my wife calls and said, listen, pick up some milk on the way home, I want you to buy some milk. And so I stop by a store, and I send Benjamin in with the money, and he buys the milk.

And I get home, and Kristen says, did you buy the milk? I'd say yes. Although I didn't really. Benjamin did with my money.

But that's still me. I authorize it. It's done on my behalf.

And there's nothing inaccurate about saying it. So to have taken Judas' money, and to buy in his name or on his behalf a field, certainly qualifies somebody speaking on my behalf to say that Judas bought the field. My grandfather bought this property, although he was dead when it was purchased.

He bought it because he invested in stocks and increased wealth, and after he died, my grandmother found out what they owned, and she donated it here. But he's the one who earned the money. He's the one who provided the money.

Though it was post-humus. It was post-mortem, I should say. Is it post-humus or post-mortem? I don't know.

Anyway, after he died. After he died, he bought it. But he did buy it.

It was his money that bought this property. Okay, so those kinds of things are not too uncommon. We talk that way a lot.

Yes, John. Is it possible that he was impaled instead of hung in the sense that we think

of? Well, it's possible, but I think less likely because it specifically says that he fell headlong and burst open. And a person being impaled is going to be much more secured in an erect position.

You know, he's not... Once someone shoves the pole up your innards, and you're like a shish kebab there, I don't think you're going to have as much likelihood of falling forward as if you were hanging from a rope. I actually don't know whether hanging in the sense... Well, I'm not sure I could hang himself in the sense of impaling. You know, I mean, men do occasionally hang themselves with a rope and a noose, but I'd find it very difficult.

Of course, I wouldn't find it easy to hang myself with a noose, but I'd find it even harder to jump down on a sharp post and impale myself. So I'd say, all things considered, he probably hung himself with a rope. A further difficulty that exists is that the two passages, the one in Acts and the one in Matthew, seem to give different reasons for calling that field by its name, Akkodamah.

It says in Matthew that... or it implies that in verse 8 it says, Therefore the field has been called the field of blood to this day. Why? Because they took this money that was said to be blood money and bought the potter's fields and therefore it is called the field of blood. The purpose of naming it that was related to the fact that it was purchased with blood money.

In Acts, it indicates that it was called that because of the blood and the guts of Judas spilling out on it. It says that, talking about his entrails gushing out and so forth, in Acts 119 it says, And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem so that the field is called, in their own language, Akkodamah, the field of blood. So the passages seem to give different rationales for giving the field that name.

Now here we don't have a serious problem, in my opinion. I mean, some may wish to make serious problems about it, but it's possible that a field was given a name for one reason, and later there were additional reasons given that would make it more appropriate to call it that. They may have called it the field of blood initially because they bought it with this money and Judas may have chosen that very site to hang himself and fallen and splattered on it and then they said, Well now it's really a field of blood.

I mean, that's not impossible. It's also possible that he fell and bled on this field in that way and then they later decide that that's the field they'd buy with his money. But both things would give reason enough to call it by that name and in some people's minds it may have been more deserving of the name because of one thing and in other people's minds it may have been more deserving because of the other.

I mean, both are good reasons to call it by that name and there may have been both reasons in the minds of some different people. We're calling it that. So, I mean, if it sounds like I'm stretching things to defend the scriptures, I don't think it's that much of a

stretch.

It's true, we don't know exactly if that's the right way to harmonize them but we don't know that it isn't and therefore our ignorance should not be construed as knowledge that the scriptures are wrong. You know, we simply don't know that to be the case. Now the other problem, there's another one, is in Matthew 27, Matthew quotes an Old Testament passage and says, this fulfilled that passage.

Now, the passage he quotes in verse 9, Matthew 27, 9, has to do with taking 30 pieces of silver, the value of him who was prized, whom they prized, and gave them for the potter's field and so forth. Now, the problem here is that if you find the passage that he is quoting, it's in Zechariah chapter 11 and there's no sense in which Zechariah 11 appears to be a prophecy about Judas. It talks about the prophet himself playing the part of a shepherd and then he retires and says, pay me what you owe me if you want to and so they gave him 30 pieces of silver and that's the passage that's quoted here.

Now, Judas does not appear anywhere in the passage in Zechariah 11. However, since we studied Zechariah not too long ago, you may recall what I said, is that the passages have, both things have something in common, in principle. Namely, in Zechariah, the meaning of the action was that they valued Christ at that price.

His service that he performed was measured out to Zechariah in that exact sum, 30 pieces of silver. Matthew considers that this case where they had purchased Jesus, as it was, from Judas for 30 pieces of silver is a case where it proved Zechariah's point that that was the value that the Jews would put on Jesus. The passage he quotes isn't necessarily about Judas, but it is about the price at which Jesus' enemies valued him, 30 pieces of silver, and therefore, that's how Zechariah uses it.

A further problem exists in the fact that in verse 9, Matthew 27, 9, Matthew attributes the quote to Jeremiah, when in fact, it's Zechariah that he appears to be quoting. He says in verse 9, that was fulfilled, that was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet. I told you there's almost as many problems with this as there are verses.

I'd like to suggest to you, though, that there have been a number of possible places that, or explanations for this seeming mistake. One possibility, of course, is that there's a textual corruption here. We don't know this to be true.

We don't have any manuscripts to argue this from, and therefore, it's an argument from silence. It may be true, it may not be true, we'll never really know unless we find other manuscripts older that have the right name in the position there. It's not impossible that Matthew did write Zechariah in the position here, and some scribe at a later time who was a little overdue for going to bed and tired, or had a blurred copy from which he was working and couldn't quite make out the name and tried to use his memory and he thought it was from Jeremiah, so he put in the name Jeremiah, and it stuck in all

succeeding copies.

We can't say that it's happened, we can't prove that it's happened, but it is certainly not impossible that it happened and we could never prove that it didn't. And that very possibility suggests that Matthew didn't necessarily make a mistake here. It's very possible that some scribe or copyist later on did.

But there's other possibilities. Even if Jeremiah is the name that Matthew put here, there's some other suggestions that have been made to vindicate Matthew in this. One is that in his day, in some of the arrangements of the Jewish canon of the Old Testament, it is known that Jeremiah was placed first among the prophets.

That is, the entire Old Testament was never found on a single scroll. There's too much material and the scrolls are too bulky. The Jews had their material of the Old Testament on separate scrolls.

And in some arrangements that have been discovered by archaeologists, Jeremiah stands first in the arrangement of the prophets. And there may have been a scroll that included all the prophets. And Jeremiah was the first prophet there.

And it may have been called the scroll of Jeremiah, just because that was the first book in the scroll. But it would have included all the other prophets as well, including Zechariah. Therefore, it could have been said that the things that Zechariah and the other prophets said were in what the Jews would have known as the scroll of Jeremiah, which was just a way of saying the scroll of the prophets.

This has been argued by many and it's not at all impossible. Although it does say that this was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet. And that makes it maybe a little less likely to be the correct explanation.

Though, depending on how literally he wants us to understand that Jeremiah spoke it. After all, I often say the Bible says, or Paul says in this passage, when he didn't really, he's not saying it, he wrote it. He's not really speaking right now.

He wrote it down. But we often say the Bible says. The Bible's not talking.

It's got it in writing. And it's possible that Matthew spoke the same way. Jeremiah said this, meaning the scroll of Jeremiah has this written in it.

And it may have been written not in the book of Jeremiah, but in Zechariah, which is also contained in the same scroll. Another possible solution. In which case, Matthew would be vindicated.

A third suggestion has been given. That it is not unlike the apostles to quote from two different passages from the Old Testament. And include parts of, say, the prophet, a

major prophet and parts of a minor prophet in one quote.

And give the credit only to the major prophet. The fact is, the minor prophets, though they are quoted frequently in the New Testament, are seldom mentioned by name. Usually it's just said as it is written in the prophets.

And then they quote when there's a minor prophet being quoted. It's not unheard of, but it's infrequent for the New Testament writers to name the minor prophet that they're quoting. And it is also not unheard of for them to mix two prophecies deliberately.

Part of a statement by a major prophet, part of a statement by a minor prophet, and then simply to give the credit to the major prophet. And not to mention the minor prophet also contributed to this. An example of that would be in Mark chapter 1 and verse 1. Now, in the King James Version, following the text of the Receptus, you won't find it, so I'll have to tell you what the Alexandrian text says, which, of course, many people do prefer.

I don't personally, but some do. In Mark 1.1, actually 1.2, I should say, as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way before you. That's from Malachi.

Then it says, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight. That's from Isaiah. Now, Mark just quotes these things without a break in between.

A prophecy from a minor prophet, Malachi, and a prophecy from a major prophet, Isaiah. Now, in our version, it just says it's written in the prophets, but in the Alexandrian text, it says, As it is written in the prophet Isaiah. And then it gives this quote.

In fact, we have a marginal reference that points this out. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet. Well, the quote that it gives does have something from Isaiah the prophet, but also something from a minor prophet, though the minor prophet is not mentioned.

So, this may be a case of the very thing we're talking about. Also, in Matthew, a little early on, when it's talking about the triumphal entry of Christ, in Matthew 21, 5, it says, in verses 4 and 5, actually, All this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell the daughter of Zion, and behold, your king is coming to you, lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. Now, the prophecy is largely from Zechariah 9, 9. However, the opening line of it in verse 5, Tell the daughter of Zion, is, in fact, not from Zechariah 9, 9, but is an expression that is found in Isaiah.

I don't remember the passage in Isaiah, and I don't have it in my cross-references here. 62, 11, thank you. Isaiah 62, 11 is where that particular line is taken from.

Tell the daughter of Zion. So, he mixes something from Isaiah and something from

Zechariah, and he does not say that it's from two prophets. He says that it's written in the prophet singular.

Now, here in Matthew 27, the question is, What prophecy in Jeremiah is in view, if any? Well, some feel that the prophecy in Jeremiah 32, where Jeremiah purchased a field from his uncle, may be in view here. If you'll turn to the passage, Jeremiah 32, and verses 6 through 9. Jeremiah was told to purchase a field while he was in prison, and it says, Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Behold, Hanamel, the son of Shalem, your uncle, will come to you, saying, Buy my field, which is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is yours to buy it. And then it says, I knew it was the word of the Lord, down into verse 8. Verse 9, So I bought the field from Hanamel, the son of my uncle, who was in Anathoth.