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Alleged Discrepancies (Part 2)



Authority of Scriptures - Steve Gregg

In this text, Steve Gregg explains that alleged discrepancies in the Bible often arise from ambiguous wording and different contexts. He notes that understanding the cultural and historical context of the time can help in understanding possible discrepancies or differences in emphasis. Critically, he emphasizes that different accounts of events can give different details, but that does not necessarily mean they contradict each other. Applying common sense and understanding can generally remove difficulties and show that the Bible does not contradict itself.

Transcript

Okay, we'll continue with where we left off in our talk about alleged discrepancies in the Bible. Now, we had just looked at some verses that some people feel contradict each other in the Bible and therefore would be called Bible contradictions or Bible discrepancies. If some wish to judge them so, but what I observed was that in each of the cases we looked at, the problem arose from the fact that the wording of the verses was not as clear as it might be, and therefore there was a certain ambiguity about one or both of the passages that were in question.

And ambiguity means it could mean one thing or another. It could have two possible meanings, maybe even more in some cases. So, when you have that phenomenon, obviously, if there's two possible meanings, one is going to be correct and the other is going to be wrong.

If you take the wrong meaning, it's very likely that that wrong meaning, when put up against another passage that is maybe wrongly understood, can be seen as contradictory. But when it's equally possible to see a different meaning as right, where there's simply no contradiction at all, seen that way, that seems to be the reasonable way to approach it, unless we're going to say that the author was unusually unintelligent or unusually dishonest. And since there's no reason to judge the authors of scripture so uncharitably, it seems more reasonable in many respects to consider that the interpretation of the passage that does not leave it in a contradictory position with another passage is the better choice.

I only gave those two examples of this one principle, that the ambiguity of a statement sometimes allows for more than one possible meaning, and one of those alternative meanings can sound contradictory to another one. But when there's more than one possible meaning, it's not necessary to make the worst possible conclusion about the way that it interfaces with another passage. Now, there are eleven other considerations that I have in your notes I want to cover and give examples of.

Another occasion for the appearance of a discrepancy may be failure to take into consideration that a word may have more than one meaning. Once again, in many of these cases, these illustrations, a modern translation like the New King James or some other will have removed the difficulty. The charges of contradiction often arose when people were reading the King James Version and the wording sometimes was different.

For example, in James chapter 1, in verse 13, it says, Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God. For God is not tempted with evil, neither does he tempt anyone. What does that say? God does not tempt people.

But, if you look at Genesis 22.1, in the King James Version, it said, Now God tempted Abraham. Now obviously, if God tempted Abraham, then he tempts people. But, James said, God does not tempt people.

So, that would be a contradiction. Either God does or he does not tempt people. Both statements cannot be true, that he does and that he does not.

You will notice, though, if you are reading the New King James or some other modern version, Genesis 22.1 says, Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, not tempted Abraham. Now, again, some might say, well, I guess the King James was flawed because it said he tempted Abraham. No, it is not a flaw.

The Hebrew word in Genesis and the Greek word in the New Testament happen to have more than one possible meaning. The word, in each case, literally means to put to the test or to prove. But, in the usage of the words, it sometimes has a particular kind of test in mind, namely a moral test.

A test in which a person is drawn toward sin or seduced or enticed toward sin. When the word means that, we usually would interpret it with the English word, tempt. To say, I was tempted, means that I experienced a phenomenon of enticement or seduction in the direction of wrong behavior.

That was being tempted. That is one way in which this word, to test, can be understood. And that is certainly how it is understood in James, chapter 1, verse 13.

God cannot be tempted with evil, neither does he tempt any man. In the sense that God does not entice people or seduce people to evil to persuade them to sin. The devil is the tempter, and our own flesh tempts us, but God does not.

He does not try to entice us to sin. That enticement comes from elsewhere. That is what James is saying.

He goes on to say, but every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed. So, all that James is saying is that God does not entice people to sin. When they are enticed to sin, there is another factor.

In this case, he speaks of one's own lusts being the cause of it. But he is not denying that the word, testing, is a word that can never be applied to what God does to man. God does, at times, put people to a test, to demonstrate what they will do.

And when he said to Abram, sacrifice your son, this was not, strictly speaking, a temptation to sin. Now, by our standards it would be, because to kill a baby, to kill a son, to kill a human, would be, we would know that is unlawful. The law and the whole of the scripture seems to teach that that is an abomination to God, human sacrifice.

So, we can say, ah, then Abram was being tempted to sin. But as a matter of fact, sin is defined in the Bible as transgression of the law. And Abraham lived before there was any scripture, before there was any law given.

God had not given Moses the law, because Moses was not born yet. Therefore, God had never communicated to man that he opposed human sacrifice. This doesn't mean that he had ever given the impression that he approved it, he just had never spoken on the subject.

Therefore, human sacrifice, never having been forbidden by God, could not have been regarded to be a sin, because sin is the transgression of the law, and there is no law about it. All people were required to do before there were laws, is just do whatever God told them to do. And when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, it would have been wrong for Abraham not to.

Because there was no law that Abraham could appeal to and say, Lord, you know, you would not allow this, because you have said elsewhere, blah, blah, blah. There was no written word from God anywhere in the world in those days. All the words from God existing were those that God spoke personally to individuals, and therefore, just direct obedience to direct commands is all that people were required to do.

This was not, in fact, a temptation to sin. This was a test of loyalty. This was a test of idolatry, to see whether Abraham idolized his son or not.

And Abraham passed the test. Now, that may bother us, because the whole subject of sacrificing one's child is abhorrent to us. And, by the way, I'm sure it was abhorrent to Abraham, too, but not so much on moral grounds as simply on the fact that he was attached emotionally to his son.

But to sacrifice anything God asked for would be legitimate. Of course, he doesn't ask us to sacrifice humans now. But what I'm saying is, some would see a contradiction, especially in the King James, where it says God tempted Abraham, and James says God doesn't tempt anyone.

In one sense of the word, which literally is translated test, and in both places you could do it that way, but the Greek word in the New Testament and the Hebrew word in the Old Testament have a flexibility of meaning. It can refer to a general test or it can refer to a more specific kind of test that we usually refer to as temptation. The same word can mean both things.

In one of those meanings, God does. In the other, God does not. God does not tempt people to do evil, but he does test people.

And that, by the way, is affirmed many times in Scripture. In the Proverbs, it says, you know, the refining pot is for silver, but God tests the hearts of men, and so forth. I mean, God puts people to the test.

That is not just a unique statement that occurs only one time in Genesis. That is a common teaching of Scripture, that God puts people to the test. In fact, even in the New Testament, over in John chapter 6, when Jesus was speaking to the multitude before he fed them and before anyone knew he was going to feed them, he said to one of his disciples, Philip, in John 6, verse 5, he said to Philip, where shall we buy bread that these may eat? Now, John tells us in the next verse, John 6, 6, but this he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament make a point that God does test people. Jesus tests people, even his own disciples, puts them to the test. Any instructor wants his students to be tested to see how they are coming along.

But that is not the same thing as tempting them to do evil. Although it is the same word in the Greek and the same word in the Hebrew. So, the point here is that a word may have more than one meaning.

A statement may be said affirmatively about something using one meaning of the word and negatively about using the same word, but intending a different meaning of the word. Yes, God does test, but God does not tempt, though it is the same word in the Greek. And it was the same word in the English translation of the King James Version.

It was tempt in both places in the King James. Another example would be repent. Does God repent? Well, it says in Numbers 23, 19, God is not a man that he should repent.

It says the same kind of thing in 1 Samuel 15, 29 and Ezekiel 24, 14. It basically says that God is not a man that he should repent. But in Genesis 6, 6 it says God repented that he had made man on the earth.

And in Jeremiah 18, verses 8 and 10, it says that God will repent of the evil or of the good that he said he would do to a nation if they change their behavior in a way so that they deserve something different than what he said they were going to get. An example of that is in the story of Jonah, where he preached 40 days and Nineveh will perish. The people repented and the Bible says, then God repented of the evil that he said he was going to do to them.

So does God repent or does he not repent? Well, once again, the word repent has more than one meaning. It can mean simply to change the mind. In fact, in the New Testament, it almost always means that, just to change the mind.

But it also, in some contexts, has the suggestion of admitting fault. You know, when I repent of my sins, I admit I was wrong. Now, God never has to repent in that sense.

Men do, but God does not. He never has to admit fault because he's never wrong. He does not repent in the sense that men often have to repent.

But he does change his mind, or at least he changes his response to people when they have changed. In such a way as to appear as if he's changed his mind. And therefore, we do have both statements that God tempts, or I assume that God repents, and that God doesn't repent, depending on which way you mean that word.

In one sense he does, in another sense he doesn't. The word can have more than one meaning. There are other examples of words with a lot of meanings in them.

For example, in English, we have words like that. The word cleave. What does the word cleave mean? Anyone know? In English? It's an English word.

Well, it depends on what connection. I mean, what does it mean when it says a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife? What does the word cleave mean? To hold on to, to be joined to, to be merged with, or whatever. To hang on to is a good word.

To cleave to his wife. It speaks of a joining, an attaching. Right? But what does it mean when someone goes out and cleaves wood with an axe? It means that they are splitting wood.

They're causing a separation of the two halves by cleaving it. Most women know, and probably most men do, what is meant by cleavage. When we're talking about human anatomy.

Literally, it means a separation. Okay? And yet, that's the opposite of what it means in some other connections. What it means to join.

Does cleave mean to join together? Or does it mean to separate? Well, in a sense, both.

Depends on the context. It's the same English word.

Imagine the confusion that could arise if someone didn't know the English language well enough, and they heard someone use one sentence using it one way, and another sentence using it just the opposite way. And yet using the same word. Same phenomenon in many things in the Bible.

The Hebrew and the Greek words sometimes have different meanings. The same word sometimes opposite meanings. Another example in older English.

This isn't so much so in our modern English, but when the King James was translated, 1611, the English language had different meanings of some words. And the word let was very different. What does let mean? Well, among other things, it means to permit, doesn't it? Let me carry that burden.

It means permit me. Let can mean to permit. But in older English, in addition to having that meaning, the same English word let meant what? To hinder or prevent.

As for example, in the King James version of 2 Thessalonians 2, talking about the man of sin, it says, that which letteth shall continue to let, until he is taken out of the way. Then the man of sin shall be revealed. All new translations have rendered that, that which hinders will continue to hinder.

Not let. Because the Greek word means hinder. The King James translated let because in 1611, the word let meant that sometimes.

In other words, the same English word let could mean permit, or it could mean don't, not to hinder. Same word, just depending on context. So language has this kind of flexibility.

It might be less confusing if that were not so. But it is so. And therefore, when we look at passages in the Bible which were written originally in Hebrew or Greek, there are occasions, certainly this isn't always the case, but there are times when the same Hebrew word may have two very different meanings from each other, or the same Greek word might.

And when that is true, you may have the phenomenon where one statement sounds like it contradicts another, but once you understand the flexibility of the vocabulary, you realize, oh, that's not really a problem after all. It's a little bit like an earlier example we gave under the first set of illustrations about akuo. It doesn't mean hear, it doesn't mean understand.

It has two different possible meanings. Phonē has two possible meanings. It's sometimes the consideration of these different meanings that helps us remove the difficulty.

A third consideration we need to look at sometimes is that one person or group of

persons may be known by more than one name. You will find four different lists in the Bible of the apostles, the twelve apostles. Now, there's only one group of twelve.

There weren't several different groups that were called the twelve apostles, but there are four lists giving their names. Matthew 10, verses 2 through 4 is one of the lists. Mark 3, verses 16 through 18, and then you'll find one in Luke 6, verses 14 through 16, and again in Acts 1, 13.

You'll find a high degree of, I think a total degree of agreement between the two lists that Luke gives us, one in Luke 6 and one in Acts, both written by Luke. The names are essentially the same on the list, but in Matthew and Mark, compared with Luke, you'll find the lists are not identical. There are some names that appear on one that don't appear on another, and some other name is there.

Now, this obviously has confused a lot of people, and some would even say that the lists contradict each other, that the writers were not in agreement with each other, or someone made a mistake as to what some of those names were that belong in the list. Now, this seems to me very unlikely, since the Gospels were written by people, some of them were on the list, some of them were the twelve apostles, and we're friends of them. Now, you might have a hard time remembering the list of the twelve apostles, because you'll never really encounter them in life, and some of them we don't know anything about them except their names, but if you're living in the first century in the church with the living apostles, it would not be hard to know the names of the twelve apostles.

It would be like memorizing the names of the presidents who lived in your lifetime. It's not too hard, because they were the leaders that everyone in the church admired. They were writing the scriptures for the church.

They were Christians. The idea that Matthew or John, who were actually on the list themselves, would somehow mistakenly give the wrong names, or that Luke or Mark, who accompanied the apostles on a regular basis and knew them all personally, that these guys could make a mistake as to who was on the list is, to my mind, an absurd suggestion. More likely it is that some of the men were known by more than one name.

For example, there is probably one man who on different lists is known by actually three different names. In one list he's called Judas of James. Usually translated Judas the brother of James, or the son of James.

No one knows what of James means. But there was a guy named Judas. This is not Judas Iscariot.

This is another Judas. Judas Iscariot was another Judas on the list. But in addition to Judas Iscariot, there was a man who in some of the lists apparently the same man is called

Thaddeus.

And in one of the lists he's actually called Lebbeus. Sometimes scholars call him the three-named disciple. Now you might say it doesn't seem very likely.

It sounds like a far-fetched thing to suggest that one man would be known by three names. That's not so far-fetched. There's one man that we know for a fact was known by three names.

We don't have any question about that. His name was Simon, who is also called Peter, who is also called Cephas in the Bible. And once he was even called Simeon.

Same guy. For a man to be known by several names was not unheard of. The apostle Matthew was also known by another name.

Do you know what it was? Levi. In one gospel he's named Levi. In another he's called Matthew.

Same person. The tax collector. The number of names to be known by different names was not too strange.

For example, in the Gospel of John we read of a man named Nathanael in chapter one. He's a friend of Philip's. But in the apostle lists there's no mention of Nathanael.

There is, however, a man who is named Bartholomew. And most scholars have reached the conclusion that Bartholomew, in the Gospel of John, there's no problem with that because Bartholomew is a Hebrew word that just means son of Tholomew. Bar means son of.

Many Jews have as a given name Bar something. Bar means son of. And Bartholomew is simply a Hebrew construction of a name that literally means son of Tholomew.

And that the man's name might be Nathanael, in the list. What I'm saying is what would appear to be a contradiction at first, oh, we've got different names here, is easily resolved if we allow for the obvious fact that some disciples have more than one name by which they were known and different lists use alternate names from the same guy. And while we can't really maybe prove that there was one man named Judas of James, we can prove from many passages of Scripture that Simon was the same person as Peter and that he was the same person as Cephas.

Now there's no question about that or that Matthew was the same person as Levi. So rather than assume that the lists are contradictory, it is a much more reasonable assumption that those who made the list since they all knew the apostles personally or were them, that they probably are simply giving alternate names for the same men. This is true of groups of people as well.

This is called contradictions in the Bible that has been pointed to by critics. It's found in Genesis chapter 37 in the story of Joseph. When Joseph was sold by his brothers, he was sold to a roaming caravan of nomadic people and they took him down to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, an Egyptian official.

Now in Genesis 37 and verse 36 it says, Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard. So Potiphar was Egyptian and Joseph was sold to Potiphar by whom? It says by the Midianites. If you look over at Genesis chapter 39 and verse 1, Genesis 39 and verse 1 says, Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.

This gentleman in Honolulu that I had a lengthy discussion with who claimed to have found 30-something contradictions in the Bible, this was one of the ones on his list. He said, look at that. One passage says that the Midianites sold Joseph to the Egyptians.

Another passage says Ishmaelites did it. And since Midian and Ishmael are not the same person, we must assume the Midianites and Ishmaelites are different tribes. Well, maybe, maybe not.

It seems very strange that the author of Genesis or even the final editors would allow such an obvious flaw to exist in the narrative so close to each other. In fact, as you read the whole chapter of 37, you'll find that the people to whom Joseph was sold are alternately called Midianites or Ishmaelites throughout the whole story. It'll say the Ishmaelites and then talk about the same people and say the Midianites and Ishmaelites and Midianites are terms that can both apply to the same people.

One evidence of this is found in Judges chapter 8 in the story of Gideon. Gideon, as all who read the story know, delivered his people from the Midianite oppression. And when he had done so, the people were so appreciative of Gideon that they wanted him to be their king and he refused this honor.

But if you look at Judges chapter 8 verse 22 and following it says, Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, Rule over us, both you and your son and your grandson also, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian. Now Midian is another word for the Midianites. But Gideon said to them, I will not rule over you nor shall my son rule over you.

The Lord shall rule over you. Then Gideon said to them, I would like to make a request of you that each of you would bring me a golden earring. For they, that is the people who had been slaughtered, had golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites.

Now that's interesting. We were just told that they were the Midianites in verse 22 but now we're told that they had golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites. Now here's

what I think most scholars would do with this.

They would say that the word Ishmaelite in Old Testament times that's not all that clear is it? Because if somebody is a citizen of Saudi Arabia, if that's his origin then he'd be an Arab. But that would also be true if he was a Kuwaiti or if he was Iranian or if he was Jordanian or Lebanese or even Egyptian. A person might be Lebanese and yet we would call him an Arab.

A Jordanian we would call an Arab. Why? Because the word Arab is sort of an umbrella term that covers a whole group of races that are all linked in some kind of a genetic history with each other back there in the Middle East. Now apparently the word Ishmaelite functioned in Biblical times similarly to our modern word Arab.

To say that someone was a Midianite and to say well the Midianites they wore golden earrings because they were Ishmaelites it would be like us saying this man was a Lebanese and he was a Muslim because he was an Arab. What it means is that all Arabs typically are Muslims and because this person is a Lebanese he's going to be a Muslim because a Lebanese is a Muslim I mean is an Arab. So also if all Ishmaelites wore gold earrings the explanatory note well the Midianites they had gold earrings because they were Ishmaelites and the terms though different are applied to the same people.

Everyone in this room is Caucasian it would appear. That may not be true I don't know all of your ethnic backgrounds but the fact of the matter is I could say of most of you you are Caucasian. I could also say of most of you you are American.

That would not be contradictory because many Americans are Caucasians and you could be both and most of you are both. This is not different really in principle than saying these people are Midianites and they are Ishmaelites the categories overlap and so the same persons or groups can be known by more than one name and that resolves difficulties from time to time. Let's go on to a fourth consideration different passages may reflect a change in conditions.

Now here's an amazing thing I've seen many contradictions who have actually raised this one. Genesis 1.31 says that God looked on all the things he had made and behold it was very good. Then they compare that with Genesis 6.5 which basically says everything was really bad.

It says the Lord saw that wickedness was great on the earth and the thoughts and intents of men's hearts were only evil continually. Now here we have something strange that says everything was very good and another verse says God saw everything was very bad. Can you believe it? There are actually critics of the Bible who say there you have a contradiction things can't all be very good and all very bad at the same time.

And of course the answer is that's true. But the Bible is not affirming that things were

very good and very bad at the same time. We've got different times here.

We've got before the fall and stupid oversight on the part of the critic to raise this and yet this is often the kind of contradictions that are said to exist. Oh look at this. This is a classic example of people not trying to understand what they're reading just trying to find verses that contradict each other.

It's clear that there can be a change of conditions and one passage can describe circumstances before that change and another passage describe things after that change and certainly they will say different things because there's a difference. Now a case that's not quite as obvious or not quite as easy to resolve but no doubt has the same solution is found in 2 Samuel. In 2 Samuel 14 27 we're given some information about Absalom and his family Absalom was the son of David and 2 Samuel 14 27 tells us to Absalom were born three sons and one daughter whose name was Tamar.

She was a woman of beautiful appearance. So Absalom had three sons born to him and a daughter named Tamar. But if you look at three chapters later four chapters later 2 Samuel 18 and verse 18 says now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself which is in the king's valley for he said I have no son to keep my name in remembrance and he called the pillar after his own name since he didn't have a son to leave his name to he left it to a pillar to be remembered by and to this day it's called Absalom's monument.

Now we have certainly different information here. In chapter 14 we're told that three sons were born to Absalom but in chapter 18 he set up a pillar and said I have no sons to carry off my name into history. Is it possible for both of these to be true? Well not at the same time certainly.

It can't be true that a man has three sons and then has no sons at the same moment. But is there any imaginable scenario where a man might have three sons at one point in life and at a different time in his life not have any sons. Well I have two but there was a time in my life where I had none.

If I set up a pillar before my sons were born and said I have no sons I'm assuming I set up this pillar that would be true but at a later time in my life maybe I have a couple sons. That's a possible change but in this case it's probably the reverse. It's probable that Absalom's sons were born earlier but didn't survive.

And later when he had no surviving sons he set up a pillar and said I have no sons to carry on my name. Now the likelihood of this seems strong in view of the wording of the passage in 2 Samuel 14 27 because it says in the word of Tamar interesting it gives the daughter's name which is fairly unconventional in the Bible but it doesn't give the names of the sons. How do we explain this? Three sons who go nameless and a daughter whose name is mentioned.

Well I suppose we couldn't be insistent upon this but it seems probable that the sons died in infancy maybe even at birth. They were born to him but they didn't survive so they couldn't even be christened or to be circumcised in name or else maybe they were named but they didn't live so their names didn't matter. They didn't reach maturity so it wasn't worth mentioning their names.

They don't have any families to carry on the name. To my mind it's very probable almost certain that those sons died young which would be the best explanation of why their names are not given whereas the daughter's name is. She survived.

The father said at one time in the absence of life there were three sons born to him but at the end of his life he said I have no sons to carry on my name. That simply reflects a change in conditions. Now of course a person could reject this explanation but there's no reason to.

It's a reasonable and probable explanation and to my mind it is an example where conditions have changed and therefore the statement of fact is different. Consideration. Different passages may be written for different purposes or emphasis.

Now this is simply to say that you'll never find for example in let's say in historical writings you'll never find that two historians give all the same details. They can't. History is too full.

No one could write everything. John said even about the life of Christ in the end of his gospel he said I suppose if everything was written for 50 years on earth if someone wanted to write a longer period of history they could no way include everything. Historians have to be selective and that's true of all writing not even in history.

When I write on a subject I don't say everything I know on the subject only those things that are pertinent to the points I'm trying to make. Now because of that different writers wishing to emphasize different things sometimes will emphasize different things. Now there have been many times that people have felt there's a glaring contradiction in the story of the life of Jesus as recorded by John from that which is recorded in the other gospels which are called the synoptic gospels.

Matthew, Mark and Luke are called synoptic gospels and John's called just the gospel of John. Now the gospel of John is different than the synoptics because there's only one miracle of Jesus that's found in John and in the synoptics. There are many miracles of Jesus that are found in all three of the synoptic gospels but not found in John.

And there are several miracles in John that are not found in the synoptics. There's a difference. Also the speeches of Jesus and the sayings of Jesus in John there's no overlap or almost no overlap between the comments that John won't include and he'll have speeches that the others don't give.

There's a very different portrait as it were in John with very different details and it's so different in fact that most liberal scholars who are always looking for some deep against the Bible they just take it for granted John's gospel is not historical. They say the synoptic gospels they may be close to the truth probably have some embellishments that might be found in the synoptics but that John's gospel they say that's way out in left field they say that was probably written by the church in the second century and after this highly developed theology of Jesus being a God man and stuff came up in the church and they now read that into their stories they put words in his mouth he never spoke claims he never made. This is what liberals say about that because they see and many people can see there is a clear difference for example the other gospels spend most of their time recording things Jesus did in Galilee John almost exclusively records things he did in Judea the other end of the country.

Well I mean this could be a problem but it certainly doesn't need to be it would be easy to write biographies of the same man and include different details because so many things could be said that someone has to leave some of them out everyone has to leave some of them out John's gospel differs from the others for this very reason that it did not wish to repeat what the others had said when John wrote his gospel the other three gospels were already in circulation had been for some time there was a lot of overlap in the material of the three synoptic gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke did not all record all the same things as each other they were just repeating what three of the other writers had already said in fact he seems to bend over backward not to repeat anything they said and simply to fill in gaps that they left vacant there is a story that comes from Papias, an early church father at the end of the first century Papias knew the apostles or at least he knew some of the people who knew the apostles and it is from him that we learn his writings that John's gospel was written late in his life when he was near death and that the elders of the church of Ephesus where John spent his final years actually prevailed upon him to write his memoirs or at least to dictate them for them to write them down because there were many memories of his experience with Jesus that would die with him because the other gospels had not recorded them the writings had been in circulation now but there were many additional things that were not in those other gospels that John remembered and the elders of the church in Ephesus did not wish for him to die and these memories to die with him so they prevailed upon him to write as it were a supplementary gospel to supplement the others to fill in parts that were left out of course there were some things in common all the gospels record the death and resurrection of Jesus and this certainly seems to be not because there is a contradiction between the three gospels and John on the other hand but because there is a different purpose for writing John isn't trying to just repeat what others have said he is trying to specifically record things that they didn't record and that makes sense it is entirely possible for the Jesus of the gospel of John to also be the Jesus of the synoptic gospels there is not really a problem in harmonizing them you just have to realize that John is not trying to duplicate the material he is trying to supplement that is a different purpose

than say Matthew or Mark or Luke wrote for they didn't mind duplicating what others have said another area where some people think there is contradiction but it is probably explained by the same consideration that is that Paul is adamant that we are saved by faith not works we are even saved by faith this is Paul's consistent doctrine throughout his writings one example but only one of many that could be given is in Romans chapter 3 in verse 28 where Paul says therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law okay it is faith not deeds not works that justify a man but perceptive readers have for a long time recognized that James when he talks about being justified actually says something very different than what Paul says in James chapter 2 there is an extended discussion from verse 14 on but the basic thought is that faith without works is dead and that one needs to have works as well as faith and in James 2.24 James says you see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only so Paul says we are justified by faith not deeds James says we are justified by works not faith only now that certainly sounds like two statements that cannot both be true at least on the surface there has been so much difficulty in reconciling what James said and what Paul said on this point that even Martin Luther couldn't settle the problem satisfactorily for himself and he wished to exclude James from the Bible he was big on Paul and he thought maybe James doesn't really belong in the Bible maybe James isn't an inspired writer at all and although Luther when he made his own translation of the Bible into German he didn't delete the book of James he put it at the end and he called it a right straw epistle meaning he's a German he spoke in different expressions he meant an epistle of straw of little value but that was just because Luther was not pleased with the fact that James appeared to contradict Paul on this matter actually the fact of the matter is that Paul and James were writing they both had the same view I can prove that I can prove that Paul and James had the same view on this but they were writing for different purposes to emphasize different sides of the coin as it were one coin has two sides namely a person who has faith in God because they have faith will have behavior that conforms to that faith if a person claims he has faith but his behavior doesn't conform to what he claims to have he's lying he doesn't really have faith at all Paul himself acknowledges this in many places in Galatians 5 in verse 6 in Galatians 5, 6 Paul says neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters to God but what does matter to God is a faith that works through love Paul believed the same thing James did faith, in order to be genuine has to have works it produces works it's not a faith plus works proposition it's a faith that works it's a faith that is producing change in my life because it is there I'm not justified just by having the works I'm justified just by having the faith but if I say I have faith but I don't have works then I don't have the faith in fact because true faith will produce a change in my life that was the conviction of James and of Paul they both agreed the same thing but what we find is and by the way Paul says that in many other places too if you read the book of Titus there's at least five times in those three chapters where Paul speaks of the necessity of good works Christ gave himself to purify for himself a people zealous for good works he says there are those who profess to know God but by their works they deny him this is Paul not James talking it's Paul talking

about the necessity of works as a demonstration that faith is genuine that's all that James is saying James is saying if you don't have the works then any claim you have to faith is a faulty claim faith that doesn't have works is dead you can't be saved with a faith that doesn't change you I like the way A.W. Tozer said it Tozer said that any faith that doesn't make a difference in your life doesn't make a difference to God either God is not impressed with a claim to have faith if it doesn't change you why should it change your relationship with him well that's what James said that's what Paul said Paul believed that the faith that saves produces works and that you could tell if a person had this faith by whether they had works or not that's what James believed why do they say different things then the simple reason is this the whole truth is that we are justified by faith and that this faith produces works James, well let me put it this way Paul wrote his letters largely to refute legalists and Judaizers who were trying to tell Paul's converts that they needed to be put under the law of Moses in addition to believing in Christ they had to be circumcised and they had to conform to the law of Moses we know that these people were coming after Paul all over the place he mentions them in many places in his writings and we read of them in the book of Acts when Paul wrote he was insisting on the fact no it is not thieves of the law it is faith that saves us Abraham was justified by faith and so are we now Paul, because he was arguing against legalists emphasized the part of faith Paul would not have denied in fact he even admits in scripture sure we need to have works but he is emphatic about the faith because he is resisting people who are big legalists on the works James on the other hand who has the same view as Paul does is writing for another purpose than Paul he is not refuting legalists the Gnomians were people who said it does not matter how you live as long as you believe the right things you can live in sin you can worship idols you can live in fornication as long as you believe that is all that matters well neither Paul nor James believed that and James was writing against that heresy so he insisted listen it is not just faith and then you can do whatever you want if your faith does not produce works of righteousness then your faith does not exist now you cannot find any difference between what James believed and what Paul believed on this matter you only find a difference in emphasis because they had different purposes in writing Paul refuting the legalists James refuting the anti-Gnomians who did not believe it mattered what you did so you find their letters almost look like they are at a tug of war with each other but they are not when James and Paul got together they got along but when they were fighting different heresies they emphasized the part of the truth that that heresy needed to be corrected by so you got two sides of the same coin James emphasizes one side of the coin Paul the other because they were in tension with heretics of different kinds so different passages may be written for different purposes or emphasis and that of course makes them say different things which does not mean they contradict each other you can demonstrate that these men agreed with each other in fact now a sixth consideration is that literary devices may be unfamiliar to our culture I don't have any examples given here except of various devices anthropomorphisms what's an anthropomorphism well that's where something that is not a man anthropos the Greek word for man morphos means form in the Greek

anthropos is man morphos is form so anthropomorphos means form of man and an anthropomorphism is a figure of speech of a man is spoken of as if they were a man so that when you read of the trees of the field clapping their hands in Isaiah 55 12 that's an anthropomorphism it's talking about trees as if they were human as if they were men they're not but it's a poetic device likewise God who is not a man is sometimes spoken of in anthropomorphic terms sometimes the stories about interaction with God and man they anthropomorphize God in his side of the story when Adam sins and he's hiding in the garden God says where are you Adam as if God doesn't know where Adam is he's speaking as if he were a mere man he knows but he's interacting with Adam the way another man would interact God had to come down pretty far to the level of man to interact face to face and in many cases the stories of God's interaction with man are anthropomorphic in the sense that God takes on or talks as if he is in the form of man and he says I'm going down tomorrow I'm going down to visit there to see if they're as bad as I've heard and if they are I'll know that's what he said to Abraham in Genesis 18 God had to visit Sodom and Gomorrah to know I thought God was everywhere in the universe how could he not know that he appeared in the form of a man and was conversing with Abraham man to man and talking as if he were a mere man strange it seems strange to us but it's a phenomenon found in scripture the Bible talks about the eyes of the Lord are in every place or the hand of the Lord or the arm of the Lord these are anthropomorphic expressions God doesn't have a literal eye or hand he's a spirit he's not made of flesh he doesn't have a body Jesus said God's a spirit spirits don't have flesh and bones but the Bible often speaks of God it's a figure of speech called an anthropomorphism well obviously you could find if you read somewhere in the Bible that God knows everything in another place he says to Abraham now I know that you fear me because you did not spare your son it sounds like a contradiction wait did God know or didn't he know does God know everything or does he know everything well he does but there are passages where it sounds like he doesn't because we are reading of an anthropomorphism and this is true of many things like I say trees can be likened to humans rocks can Jesus said the rocks themselves would cry out they don't talk but people do and he's speaking of the rocks as if they were people and that's common in scripture by the way it's not uncommon in other literature either but it's common in scripture and we need to take figures of speech literary devices into consideration under the same heading there's also such things as apocalyptic images an apocalyptic image is a highly symbolic highly imaginative symbol usually found in a vision that does not I mean where every feature of it symbolizes something for example in Revelation a book that is written in these kind of images in Revelation 5 I think it's around verse 6 John sees Jesus in heaven but he doesn't see Jesus the way that you and I are going to see him he sees a lamb as if it had been slain having seven eyes and seven horns that sounds like a monstrosity to me if Jesus when he comes looks like a lamb a dead lamb with seven eyes on his head and seven horns that's not exactly how I expect to see him that's not exactly the way he went up he's supposed to come back the same way he went up well if you went to heaven today would you see Jesus like that? I don't think so

that Revelation is I mean it's one of its features some of the Old Testament prophecies do that too Daniel, Zechariah and Ezekiel do this they use apocalyptic imagery seven eyes in the Jewish symbolism means perfect or complete seven means the number of completion the eyes represent seeing or knowing he knows everything he's got complete knowledge it's like he has seven eyes the number of completeness he sees everything he has seven horns in the Hebrew imagery a horn of an animal represents strength many times the prophets speak about the horn David says that God has exalted his horn meaning his power as king Jesus has seven horns a lamb with seven horns that means he has all power seven eyes and seven horns he's also not a woolly lamb in reality but he was seen as a lamb because he was a sacrifice it's representing his sacrificial character like a lamb slaughtered for us this is imagery that is not to be taken literally when we see a beast with seven heads and ten horns ruling the world and all the world worship it I don't know anyone who believes that the beast is a literal animal it's understood the beast is representative of either a man or a government or a system or something because this is imagery of an apocalyptic sort if we don't see that and understand the imagery or the literary devices we may be very confused about understanding certain things another important thing another literary device is the use of hyperbole you need to know about this because the Bible has a great deal of it so does common speech hyperbole just means you exaggerate for the sake of emphasis the fisherman story is always the classic case of exaggeration when he gives you stretches out his arms and shows you the size of the one that got away it's a classic in our culture stereotype of someone exaggerating and misleading, lying but exaggeration is not always used to lie it is often used to emphasize something when the mother says to her child I've told you a million times to take off your muddy boots she's not intending to convey the notion that she's literally said that a million times because she hasn't no one has said anything a million times that's a much too large a number but it's not uncommon to say now she's not lying she's not trying to fool her child she's not trying to convey to the child there's been a literal million times I've said this to you what she's doing is exaggerating for emphasis, to emphasize the point that she's told him more times than they could remember mom all the kids are doing this wearing Nikes well that child knows that all children don't wear Nikes, literally that's a hyperbole the idea is to say that Nikes are so widely worn so commonly worn that mom ought to let me wear them too it's to emphasize a point without any intention of being 100% accurate the word all in scripture occurs frequently in the form of hyperbole so that you read the plague of locusts killed all the cattle and all the livestock in Egypt but the next plague killed some more of them you know that sounds like a contradiction but you've got a hyperbole here it's very common the plague of locusts in Egypt it says the plague of locusts was such as no locust had ever been before nor shall ever be afterward but then later on in the book of Joel another locust plague is described and says there's nothing like it been before worse than any before or after but that can't be literally true the use of hyperbole is not uncommon in scripture Jesus said you have to hate your father and your mother and your wife and your children that's a hyperbole he said if your eye or

your hand cause you to stumble cut it off and cast it from you that's a hyperbole he doesn't want anyone to really do that he's trying to emphasize something there that if something would prevent you it might never literally prevent you to so you don't ever have to do that but whatever it is however valuable to you it may be get rid of it in your life because it will prevent you from entering the kingdom this is hyperbole and because of hyperbole obviously some statements that use a hyperbole will seem to be affirming a certain thing to be true and another statement that's not using a hyperbole giving more of the precise information will seem to be different I already gave some examples a plague in Egypt killing all the cattle and this figure of speech is recognized by all scholars whether they're believers or not we recognize the use of hyperbole in our own modern speech and it's not hard to recognize in ancient writings as well especially in ancient writings the oriental people and the middle eastern people to this day are much more fond of hyperbole than even we are in our culture it's just a manner of speaking they're not deceiving, they're not lying they're just emphasizing by a literary device they're not miscommunicating or misleading now let's go on to the seventh consideration Genesis 2.17 God said to Adam of all the trees of the garden you may freely eat but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat in the day you eat of it you will surely die but in the next chapter Genesis 3.4 Eve is having a conversation about the eating of that tree and she is told you shall not surely die right? Genesis 2.17 says if you eat that tree you will surely die Genesis 3.4 says no if you eat that tree you will not surely die is this a contradiction? yes they can't both be true can they? can it be true that if you eat it you'll die and at the same time true that if you eat it you won't die? of course that is a contradiction but this is not the Bible contradicting itself the second statement is made by Satan and he is indeed contradicting what God said but this cannot be found to be a flaw in the scripture that it records conversations that occurred where some of the speakers may not be telling the truth you see the fact that Genesis 2.17 already told us what God said means that we should recognize in the next chapter when the devil says no that's not true we recognize the devil's lying and everyone who reads it knows that what's interesting to me is that there are critics who have actually given this as an example of contradictions in the Bible again classic illustration of the fact that some people couldn't care less about trying to understand what's going on they just are looking at the shallowest level for statements that seem to contradict each other of course those statements contradict each other but we should not be surprised if Satan contradicts God and the fact that the Bible records accurately conversations and statements of people and the devil and so forth not all of whom will tell the truth all the time should be taken into consideration another example like this is something that is said of Joseph's brothers in Genesis chapter 42 when they didn't yet know that Joseph was the grand vizier of Egypt they had encountered him but didn't know it was him and he had put the money back in their sacks and they don't know it but they discover it in Genesis 42 verse 27 it says but as one of them, that is one of the brothers of Joseph opened his sack to give the donkey feed at the encampment he saw his money and there it was in the mouth of his sack and then a few verses later it says it's talking about

when they got home it says in verse 35 then it happened as they emptied their sacks that surprisingly every man's bundle of money was in his sack now there's no problem so far one of the guys found his money in the sack at the encampment when they were on their way home that's not the problem the problem is in the next chapter chapter 43 in verse 21 these brothers have now gone back to Egypt to get more food and they're trying to explain this mystery to the guy who represents Joseph, Joseph's servant and in verse 21 they say but it happened when we came to the encampment that we opened our sacks and there was each man's money in full weight now what did they say? they said that they all opened their sacks at the encampment and found their money there but actually the story tells us that only one found his money there the rest of them didn't find it until they got home so they're not telling the whole truth there is a contradiction here but once again the Bible doesn't confuse us the Bible tells us first of all what really happened it later tells us what they said happened if they contradict what really happened don't blame the Bible for telling us so these men are not represented in scripture as honest men by the way if you read the story of Joseph's brothers you never are encouraged to think these are men to be trusted and therefore if they tell a story that actually is factually different than the story as the Bible narrator already told it he's just telling us they said this he's not telling us that they're telling the truth he's not affirming what they said he's already contradicted them earlier they're contradicting the facts but the Bible is not in itself affirming two things to be true that are contradictory another example of this is the question of who killed King Saul I have to move a little more fast than I have been because we're going to run out of time before long but in 1st and 2nd Samuel which by the way were originally one book it was not until I think the Septuagint translation was made into Greek of the Old Testament that they were divided into two books for the sake of convenience but 1st and 2nd Samuel were originally just one continuous book so that the first chapter of 2nd Samuel originally was just the next chapter after the last chapter of 1st Samuel but in the last chapter of 1st Samuel chapter 31 we read of the death of King Saul in battle he's on Mount Gilboa fighting against the Philistines and it says in chapter 31 verse 4 then Saul said to his armor bearer draw your sword and thrust me through with it lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me but his armor bearer would not for he was greatly afraid therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it and when his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead he also fell on his sword and died with him so Saul committed suicide he had been wounded he knew the enemy was going to catch up with him they would abuse him and torture him before killing him he didn't want that so he just he believed in euthanasia he killed himself to avoid that torture and his armor bearer killed himself so far there's no problem it's just a gross story but it doesn't really have any contradictions but when you come to the next chapter 2nd Samuel 1 we find David waiting for news about the battle what's going on out there and a runner comes to him an Amalekite to bring news of what happened and in verse 6 it says then the young man who told him said as I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa there was Saul leaning on his spear and indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him now when he looked behind him he saw

me and he called to me and I answered here am I and he said to me who are you and I answered him I'm an Amalekite and he said to me again please stand over me and kill me for anguish has come upon me but my life is still remaining in me so I stood over him and killed him because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen and I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm and I brought them to my Lord meaning to David who was obviously going to be the next king and whom Saul had persecuted for a long time before his death now what do we do here we have one chapter tells us of Saul falling on his own sword and killing himself the next chapter tells us of him being actually finished off being given the coup de grace by this passing Amalekite who found him wounded is there a contradiction between these two stories yes there appears to be maybe not maybe we can say Saul fell on his sword but he was still alive and this guy came and finished him off that's one way to possibly see it but the more likely way to see it and I think the way David saw it is that the guy was lying the facts are given to us in chapter 31 of 1 Samuel what we have in chapter 1 of 2 Samuel is simply the account of the facts by another person who may or may not be telling the truth now the author of the book of Samuel knows that we know what happened because he just told us and when he reports this conflicting story in the next chapter he fully expects us to realize oh that guy is not telling the truth we just read what happened in the previous chapter now this guy is saying something else happened well why would this guy lie well you see he knew David was going to be the next king he knew Saul had persecuted David he probably thought that David would reward him for being the man who did in his arch enemy Saul and so he took credit for it he apparently came upon the body of Saul before the Philistines did he saw him dead there and thought whoa here's Saul I can grab his crown his bracelets take him to David and claim that I killed him and get some kind of reward he did get a reward David killed him and later on David spoke about this story in 2 Samuel 4 verse 10 when the men who killed one of Saul's sons who succeeded him came and brought his head to David thinking David would reward them for this in 2 Samuel 4 10 David said as the Lord lives when someone told me saying look Saul is dead thinking to have brought good news I arrested him and had him executed in Ziklag the one who thought I would give him a reward he's referring to the story in 2 Samuel 1 the man who brought him the story thought he'd be rewarded but he didn't get rewarded he was killed for killing the king the point is David recognized this man was an opportunist hoping to get some kind of position or reward from the new king David he miscalculated David's attitude towards Saul obviously but there's every reason to believe that the man was lying and since the same writer wrote both 1 and 2 Samuel and the two stories occur within a chapter of each other and the first account is a narrative of what happened and the second one is only a narrative of what this man claimed happened there's no reason to see a contradiction except that the man contradicted the truth and that scripture correctly reported what he said he happened to be lying apparently an eighth consideration is that there are various means of calculating time used in different passages this is a fairly interesting one I think in Jeremiah 25 1 and this is a little easier to illustrate if I had a marker board or something available to me but I

don't really have one easily available so I'm just going to try to explain it if I can in Jeremiah chapter 25 and verse 1 it says the word that came to Jeremiah was the first year of the reign of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon now notice the fourth year of Jehoiakim king of Judah was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon just bear that in mind in Daniel 1 1 we have a statement that differs from this sometimes thought to be a contradiction Daniel 1 1 says in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it now notice both passages speak of Nebuchadnezzar as king of Babylon one of these passages are speaking of the fourth year of Jehoiakim and the other is speaking of the third year of Jehoiakim now Jeremiah says that the fourth year of Jehoiakim is the first year of Nebuchadnezzar but now we read of the third year of Jehoiakim presumably the year before the fourth year and yet Nebuchadnezzar is already king of Babylon I thought that the fourth year of Nebuchadnezzar was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar but here we read of Jehoiakim's third year and Nebuchadnezzar is already king some have felt that this is a contradiction that Daniel is telling us Nebuchadnezzar became king in the third year of Jehoiakim and Jeremiah is telling us that Nebuchadnezzar became king in the fourth year of Jehoiakim and that would be certainly different information even contradictory perhaps but the problem is resolved people have studied a great deal about Babylon and about ancient Israel they've discovered that in the official records of Babylon and in the official records of Israel different methods of calculating the year that a king was reigning were used one used what is called the accession year method and the other was used the non-accession year method now the names of those two methods are based on the fact that the year that a king comes to power is the year that a king ascends to the throne but those who use the accession year method basically they count the first year that he's king even a portion of a calendar year as the first year actually that's the non-accession year method the first year of our president let's see here it doesn't work because he takes office I think in January let us say that things were different for our president November of the year 2000 let us say a man is elected in November of the year 2000 and let's say the system was different instead of taking office in January he takes office in December so he's elected in November he takes office in December of the year 2000 now of course that means that the year 2000 though he comes to power that year he only really is in office for one month of that particular calendar year just the month of December the Babylonians would they used the accession year method they would call the year 2000 in that case the accession year the year he came to power he might only be in power for a month or two or a few days even but that they call his accession year the year 2001 which would be the first calendar year that he reigned for all 12 months they'd call the first year because it's the first complete year so the guy takes office in the year 2000 but the Babylonians would call that his accession year the next year would be his first and then his second and third year and so forth the Jews used the non-accession year method of reckoning and that is this that they said that if a man came to power in December of the year 2000 that was

the first year of his reign even if he only was in office a month it was still that counted as if that was a whole year and that was his first year so that January of the year 2001 would begin his second year even though it was only his second month really, I mean the one month in 2000 that he was in office counted for his first year and then the next year would be his second year so that under these two ways of reckoning the year 2001 to the Babylonians would be his first year because the other year was his accession year that's the accession method the Babylonians the year 2000 would be his accession year the year 2001 would be his first year to the Jews in that same scenario the year 2000 would be his first year and the year 2001 his second year and so on now this is known from what archaeologists have discovered about Babylonian culture and Jewish culture that Daniel was a Jew in Babylon writing to Babylonians it would seem very normal therefore for Daniel to use the Babylonian method to communicate to the Babylonians or the Jews in exile in Babylon and Jeremiah to use the Jewish method that would mean that the same year which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar to the Babylonians would be called the third year of Jehoiakim because what the Jews were calling the first year of Jehoiakim and this one year which is the first year of Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonians would call it Jehoiakim's third year but the Jews would call it his fourth year because the Babylonians only start numbering the years after the accession year but the Jews count the accession year as the first year that would mean that both would be right Jeremiah using the Jewish method in Jerusalem to his people would be speaking of the same year as Daniel was speaking of but the Jews would call that the first year of Nebuchadnezzar and then writing to them so that would explain the problem now that sounds like a complicated solution I'm sorry it's so complicated and indeed confusing so confusing that I got confused even knowing how to label these views but the fact is this is what is known to be the case and that solves the problem it's a complex solution but it's a genuine one it's authentic it's legitimate And I had someone write to me from Japan asking me this question, there's a Y-Wamer and apparently they asked someone there in Japan and said write to Steve Gregg, so he wrote to me and I gave an answer. I don't usually get Bible questions from Japan, but this is a rare one. This is what they asked.

In Mark 15, 25, speaking about the crucifixion of Jesus, it says simply, it was the third hour and they crucified him, that means they nailed him to the cross and it was the third hour of the day. If you'll turn to John chapter 19 and verse 14, we read of events prior to the crucifixion, actually while Jesus was still on trial before Pilate. So the crucifixion had not yet occurred, he was still facing the judge at this time, later crucified.

But in John 19, 14 it says, now it was the preparation day of the Passover and about the sixth hour, and Pilate said to the Jews, behold your king. Now the problem of course is that John has Jesus on trial before Pilate at the sixth hour, that is the sixth hour of the day. Mark has Jesus actually crucified at the third hour of the day, which you would presume would be three hours earlier than the sixth hour, so how can it be that Jesus would be crucified at the third hour, but three hours later, at the sixth hour, he still isn't

crucified, he's still on trial.

It seems to be a contradiction. Well one way that this has been sought to be resolved, which I personally think is likely to be the correct solution is, it is known beyond question that the Jews had one way of reckoning the hours of the day. The day began at sunrise, six o'clock, and ended at six o'clock in the evening.

That was the official hours of the day. The first hour to the Jew was seven in the morning, the second hour was eight in the morning, and the third hour was nine in the morning. So when Peter said on the day of Pentecost, these men are not drunk as you suppose, it's only the third hour of the day.

He means nine o'clock in the morning. Third hour to the Jew is nine o'clock in the morning. The day starts at six.

But John wrote in Ephesus where the culture of the Romans was predominant to an Ephesian, that is Gentile audience. Most scholars seem to believe that the Romans used a method of reckoning hours the way we do. The day doesn't begin at six in the morning, it starts at midnight.

Therefore, the first hour of the day is one in the morning and the second hour is two in the morning and so forth. That's how the Romans apparently reckoned time. And John apparently used that reckoning.

If this is true, then John is telling us, using Roman reckoning, that Jesus was on trial at six in the morning, the sixth hour of the day by Roman reckoning. He was on trial at six in the morning. Mark, using Jewish reckoning, says that Jesus was crucified at the third hour, which means nine in the morning by Jewish reckoning.

So although it sounds contradictory, it ends up being not a problem at all. It's entirely possible that Jesus was on trial at six in the morning and crucified at nine the same morning. And that would be the case if if Mark is using Jewish reckoning and John is using Roman reckoning, which, by the way, seems likely can't prove it, but it seems likely.

And that would solve an apparent problem here because there's various means of calculating time being used in different passages. A ninth consideration, different methods of grouping material are legitimately employed. I have to do this rather quickly because of our time limits.

The first two chapters of Genesis provide two different accounts of the creation. Most people think they're contradictory. For one, Genesis chapter one places the creation of animals and plants before the creation of man.

Plants are created on the third day. Animals are created on the fifth and sixth day. And man is created later on the sixth day.

So you've got the plants and animals in place before man is created. But in chapter two of Genesis, we read of a different order. We read in verse seven, the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground.

So we've got man there. Then in verse nine, it says, and out of the ground, the Lord God made every tree to grow. That's pleasant for food.

And then in verse 19, it says, out of the ground, the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to Adam. Now, obviously, we have a different order of events listed here. You've got Adam created in verse seven, trees in verse nine and animals in verse 19.

But that's a very different order than you read of in Genesis. And so some people say, oh, we got conflicting, contradictory accounts here. This is not at all the necessary way to see it.

You see, Genesis chapter one is at pains to show that it's given a chronological listing of days, the first day, the second day, the third day, the fourth day. It's very carefully, religiously noting the chronology of events. Genesis one gives us a chronological count.

Genesis two doesn't do that and doesn't attempt to do it. It starts with the creation of man. And it only mentions certain other things that God did insofar as they have anything to do with man.

That planting of the trees in verse nine is simply to show that God provided a garden for man to live in. The creation of the animals mentioned verse 19 is simply to say that God brought the animals to man. He had earlier created them.

He had earlier planted the plants. And by the way, in the Hebrew, I don't really have time to give you this. But the fact of the matter is in Hebrew grammar, there are not as many verb tenses as there are in English.

In English, we have a simple past tense. We also have what's called a past perfect tense. The past tense would be God formed, the past perfect tense would be God had formed. In the Hebrew, there's only one tense for both of those thoughts, the same Hebrew form for both ideas so that it could be translated God formed or without any change in the Hebrew could be translated God had formed.

Because the same form is for past or for past perfect tense, this means that verse 19 is God had formed the animals and he brought them now to Adam to name. The point is that Adam becomes the focal point of chapter two and all the other details of creation are mentioned only incidentally as they affect him. What we have is two different groupings of material.

We have Genesis chapter one grouping the material chronologically. We have Genesis

two grouping it topically, sort of like when you've seen a magazine article and they have a sidebar over here gives more detail on one particular aspect, but they don't want to put it in the body of the article. They say, see the sidebar on this and it gives more detail.

That's what Genesis two is doing. You've got the narration of the chronological sequence in chapter one and then you've got chapter two sort of as a sidebar or a blow up of a small part of a map, you know, more detail given here. That's what it is.

And there's no need to see any problem here, you just recognize that the two chapters use different groupings. One's chronological, one's not. Likewise, the Gospels sometimes record events in Jesus life in different order from each other, but none of them claim to be given a chronological order.

Probably one gospel is giving it more chronologically than another, but none of the authors claim they're giving chronological order. They all claim that they're just giving accounts of true events. Everybody knows who studied the Gospels that Matthew groups things topically.

If I had time, I'd go through many examples that prove this, but we don't right now. But Matthew arranges the material topically. Luke and Mark don't seem to do this quite so much and may follow a more chronological order.

The important thing is not whether they give it in chronological order or not, but whether they claim to give it in chronological order and don't. That would be a flaw. But you can tell a story without mentioning everything in the order it occurred.

This is commonly done in movies. There are a lot of movies where the opening scene is something that's actually quite advanced in the story. But then it goes back and flashes back to the events that led up to it.

You ever seen movies that do that? Happens all the time. Novels do this, too. Many of the stories I've read in books, the first chapter is something that's really quite advanced in the story.

And then the next chapter goes back and tells about the person's childhood and things that led up to it. To tell a story truly, you don't have to tell it chronologically. You can tell some of the later things earlier and go back to others.

You can flash back. You can arrange it topically. And that's what authors of scripture sometimes do.

And therefore, you don't see the same order of events listed, but you don't see them claiming a different order. You see them simply listing things in a different order. And that's not a flaw anymore with them than it is with us when we use different methods of

grouping the material, whether chronological or topical or some other or using flashbacks or sidebars or whatever.

Number 10, consideration number 10, accounts of one event may give different details. This would take a long time to go into detail on all these, but let me just give you quickly some of them. Judas death.

How did he die? Matthew 27, 5 says he hanged himself, tells us no more. Acts 118 tells us it doesn't tell us he hanged himself, but it tells us that he fell forward, his bowels gushed out. This has confused people a great deal because it's not like very different accounts of his death.

And they are very different accounts of his death, but not contradictory. The only way there's a contradiction is if both cannot be true. Is there no conceivable circumstance that could be imagined where a man hangs himself and also he falls down and his bowels gush out? Of course, both could happen.

The rope could break. The tree limb could break. Something could happen.

We don't know much detail, but these few statements. But there's no reason to say it's contradictory because it's not impossible for both to be true. The fact of the matter is that Matthew, who wrote Matthew and Luke, who wrote Acts, were acquainted with each other and they both knew the story about Judas.

It's unlikely that they had conflicting opinions about what happened to Judas. It's more that they gave different parts of the whole story. This happens all the time.

Witnesses in court never tell exactly the same details of a story just so they don't contradict each other. When you have various reports and they don't contradict each other, they supplement each other and give you more details of the picture. Paul's early years as a Christian are recorded in Acts 9, 20 through 30.

He also gives his own account of those years in Galatians 1, 15 through 24. The accounts have different details. Some have even thought they can't be reconciled, but there's no serious problem reconciling them.

It's just that Galatians gives different parts of the story than Acts gives. It can be harmonized. I've done it many times, but I can't do it right now for you.

If I had more time, I would. Also, the resurrection accounts of Jesus' resurrection. There's four different accounts in the four gospels.

The details are not identical in any two of them. At the same time, it's entirely possible to reconcile them. The fact is, the event itself is far more complex than any one record of the event is.

And therefore, various records of it give different parts of that complexity. But unless the accounts cannot all be true, they cannot all be said to contradict each other or no two of them can be. Eleventh consideration, actions of an agent are often attributed to the person who sends the agent.

A centurion approached Jesus about a sick servant in Matthew 8. However, in Luke 7, the same story says that he didn't approach Jesus. He sent the elders of the Jews. Well, if you send somebody, you are approaching by your agents that person.

It is true that what is done on behalf of another at his request or with his money or whatever is done by him. Judas purchased a field, it says. In Acts 1, but Matthew 27 says it was purchased with his money after he died by the Pharisees or by the chief priest, I should say.

Both are true. It was purchased on his behalf. It could be said he purchased it.

If something is bought after someone dies with his money in his memory, it's you know, he purchased it. It's his money. He's not around to know he bought it, but he did.

Who crucified Jesus? Well, technically, the Romans did, but the Bible frequently says that the Jews crucified Jesus. That is stated in many places. In Matthew 27, it tells us the Romans nailed him up.

But in First Thessalonians 2, 14 through 15, it clearly says the Jews crucified Jesus. Acts 23, Peter said that the Jews crucified Jesus. But of course, they did it through agents.

They instigated his crucifixion and the Romans carried it out. But the Romans had no interest in it. The Jews blackmailed the Romans and got them to do it.

So although the Romans actually did it, the Jews instigated it. It's very common to speak this way. If I give you some money to buy something for me and you do it, I bought it through an agent.

But it was me that did it. So that's often the case in passages that might seem to contradict each other. And one other thing, occasionally there is, in fact, corruption of the manuscripts.

This is extremely rare. But on occasions you'll find two passages that give contrary information, but where there is clearly a corruption in the manuscripts. There are examples in your notes.

Solomon's stalls of horses. How many were there? First Kings 4.26 said there were 40,000. Second Chronicles 9.25 says there were 4,000.

Obviously, a copyist accidentally copied 4,000. There's 40,000 in one case and it got copied again and it came down to us in the form of First Kings 4. But it's an obvious slip

of the pen. Also in Numbers 25.13, excuse me, 25.9, it says that 14,000 people were killed in a plague.

In First Corinthians 10.8, Paul says about the same plague, 13,000 were killed. Obviously, Paul had to get his figure from the book of Numbers just like we do. He didn't know it by instinct.

He either wrote the right number down, which is likely, and it was corrupted. Either First Corinthians has been corrupted by copying and the wrong numbers have been entered, or else Numbers has been. Probably Numbers has been.

It probably was originally what Paul said, but now we have a later version, a later copy of the book of Numbers that's been changed by a copyist by accident. This is not a problem with the inspiration of the Bible. This is a problem with the inspiration of the copyists.

Evangelicals do not claim that copyists operate under inspiration, only that the Bible is written originally under inspiration. And so there are places where there seem to be contradictions where this is truly and genuinely the fact. There's a copyist error that entered into one of the two passages, and that explains it.

Unfortunately, we have to end abruptly here. I would like to tie it all together, but suffice it to say, these considerations and maybe a few others that apply in some cases, when applied to difficult passages of scripture, will generally remove the difficulty and will make it clear that the Bible doesn't really contradict itself in any way that would impugn its claims to being the inspirer of God. One just has to be reasonable and use common sense in their understanding.