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Luke 22:39 - 22:71



Gospel of Luke - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg analyzes Luke 22:39-71 in his talk, highlighting the significant events of Jesus' life. He notes that although the gospel writers gave utmost attention to this part of Jesus' life, Luke provides a particularly detailed account of Jesus praying at the Garden of Gethsemane. Further, Peter's resistance against the arrest party and his subsequent denial of knowing Jesus are discussed. Gregg explains that ultimately, under Theocratic tact and due to charges being changed, the Jews believed that Jesus needed to die, leading to his crucifixion.

Transcript

Okay, we're starting today at Luke 22, verse 39. When we left off, Jesus had been in the upper room with his disciples. There's much more information about this upper room exchange given by John.

In fact, several chapters, chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16 of John are what we call the upper room discourse. The purpose for gathering in the upper room was that it was the Passover and Jesus instituted what we call the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, or the communion meal on the occasion of the celebration of Passover, and he reinvested the Passover with new meaning and said from now on, instead of remembering how God delivered you out of Egypt, you will, when you take this bread and drink this cup, remember how I have delivered you by my broken body and my shed blood. There was conversation at the table, probably went on for hours in all likelihood.

John records more of it than anyone else, but Luke had recorded a little bit of it that we don't have anywhere else, and that is in the verses we last covered in verses 35 through 38, where he gives them instructions concerning future outreach ministry and some changes that he was authorizing in the instructions that he had given them when he had sent them out short term. On those occasions, he had told them not to really take any provisions for themselves. They were to learn that God will provide even if they cannot or do not provide for themselves.

Now he says, you've learned that lesson. I think he's saying you don't need to do that

anymore. From now on, you can count yourself as having learned that lesson and travel normally as anyone else would, taking whatever things are necessary.

There's that enigmatic statement at the end about swords. We contemplated, we might have even suggested as many as half a dozen alternate interpretations of that saying. I have not ever been able to settle to my own satisfaction on which interpretation is correct.

But now they leave the upper room and they go out to the Garden of Gethsemane. And we read in verse 39, and by the way, everything from this point on has parallels in all the gospels because the passion, especially the trials and the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, which is what remains for us in Luke ahead of us, is the main subject of all four gospels. All four gospels give disproportionate treatment of this short period of time.

In fact, the Passion Week receives a quarter of the attention in one of the gospels and almost half in another. So even though it's only one week, it is obviously given more attention, more detailed attention than any other part of Jesus' life because the gospel writers apparently felt it had the deepest significance. And so we read, and coming out, he went to the Mount of Olives as he was accustomed and his disciples followed him.

When he came to the place, he said to them, pray that you may not enter into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw. And he knelt down and prayed, saying, Father, if it is your will, remove this cup from me.

Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done. Then an angel appeared to him from heaven, strengthening him, and being in agony, he prayed more earnestly and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When he rose up from prayer and had come to his disciples, he found them sleeping from sorrow.

Then he said to them, why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Now, this tells us he went out of the upper room to the Mount of Olives. The Last Supper apparently occurred in Jerusalem.

The Mount of Olives was immediately to the east of Jerusalem. As you exit the city to the east, you soon begin to ascend the Mount of Olives. In Matthew and Mark, we are told that this particular place on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, where Jesus prayed like this, was called the Garden of Gethsemane.

We're also told that although the disciples went with him, only three of them were really allowed to go into the garden with him to pray. Nine of the disciples were left at the gate when he entered and he took Peter, James, and John, who we have regarded as the inner circle of his disciples, into the garden where they could apparently overhear his praying. Now, they did fall asleep and therefore, they didn't hear much more than what they record.

People have said, well, if they fell asleep, how can they record what Jesus said? Well, they don't record much of what Jesus said. He prayed for an hour apparently and all we get from it is, Father, if it's your will, remove this cup from me. Now, the other gospels tell us that he actually did this three times.

Luke just compresses it into one time, not that he's denying that Jesus did it two more times, but since there was no more content to the other two times than they have here in the first time, this tells us the whole story of what Jesus prayed. Now, he did tell them to watch and pray with him, but they were not able to do so. They fell asleep and this happened all three times.

Once again, Luke is only telling us about one of the times, but three times Jesus prayed this way and went back and found his disciples asleep, stirred them, urged them to stay awake and pray that they might not enter into temptation. He went back again to pray, apparently within earshot. Luke says it's about a stone's throw away.

I'm not sure how far a stone's throw is. It seems like a rather inexact measurement. I could throw a stone a little further or a little shorter than someone else might.

I would think that somebody, a little old lady might throw a stone 30 yards and a stronger quarterback type might throw a stone 100 yards. I don't know how far he was away, but he was some distance away and yet praying loudly enough that his prayers this much could be heard. Luke says that Jesus said to his father, if it is your will, remove this cup from me.

Both Matthew and Mark actually raised the issue of if it is possible. Father, if it's possible. In Mark, he says, Father, all things are possible to you, but remove this cup from me.

Why would anything be regarded as questionable as to whether it was possible? Obviously, everything's possible with God and Mark's gospel even has Jesus affirming that, so why even raise the point, if it's possible? Obviously, he means if it's possible to have this cup removed from him and still accomplish the purposes that he came to accomplish. If there's any other way that man's redemption could be acquired without him dying in this manner, let it be so. The fact that God did not spare Jesus, that he did not take this cup from him suggests very strongly that there was no other way that man could be redeemed except this.

It was not possible to redeem mankind without Jesus dying. This is, of course, very suggestive when we consider that some people might feel that the death of Jesus was rather unnecessary, especially if people think they can be saved without the blood of Jesus. Why, if this were possible, would God not know this? Why would God sacrifice his son if there was some way he could save people less expensively than that? Not sacrificing quite so much.

Jesus definitely prayed and was heard, and he basically said, if it is possible, presumably meaning if it's possible for your plan to be fulfilled, if it's possible for your will to be done, and Luke simply puts it, if it is your will, but God didn't spare him. Now, Jesus did ask that the cup be taken from him all three times that he prayed, but he also said, but not my will, but yours be done according to the gospels, the other gospels, and in this one too. So he was surrendering his will to that of his father, which is interesting because it means that Jesus had a different will than his father.

That is, he had a will of his own, and like anybody else, he had to surrender his will to the father, not my will, but your will means that, okay, I've just told you what my will is. My will is that this cup be taken from me. If it's your will that it not be taken from me, and truly that's what happened to be the case, Jesus said, okay, I've got a will and you've got a will.

Interesting that Jesus had a will, in this case, a will contrary to God's will. However, he surrendered his will, and that's really what we must do. We shouldn't necessarily assume that a spiritual person will not have a will of their own, even a will that at times would wish for something other than what God wishes for, but the mark of godliness is surrender, saying I know what I would like, but I'm going to surrender what I would like to what you would like, and that's what Jesus did.

Don't do what I want, do what you want, he says to his father. And so we know that the cup did not pass from him, and he was arrested. Verses 43 and 44 are only found in Luke, and they're only found in the later manuscripts of Luke.

They're not found in the early manuscripts of Luke, so many would suggest that they are added. The reference to an angel coming and strengthening him, we do know that this happened after his fasting for 40 days in the wilderness. I believe it's Mark, if I'm not mistaken, tells us that afterwards the angels came and strengthened Jesus, came and ministered to him.

It may be that somebody, not Luke, has added these words in a later manuscript at this point, suggesting that of course this would happen if God comforted him in his extremity after fasting for 40 days, he would certainly comfort him in his extremity in this case. But since the manuscripts are not all in agreement, we can't be certain that this was original with Luke. Likewise, verse 44 is not found in the oldest manuscripts of Luke.

So we don't know exactly if that is something Luke wrote or not. Now, again, though this happened three times, we only read of one time here, and that is because all three times were pretty much the same. So Luke, in order to simply give us the content of what Jesus prayed and the fact that his disciples disappointed him by falling asleep instead of praying with him, it only needs to be mentioned once.

You could say triple that, and that's all we need to know about that according to Luke.

Now, verse 47, and while he was still speaking, behold, a multitude and the one who is called Judas, one of the 12, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said to him, Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss? Then those around him saw what was going to happen, and they said to him, Lord, shall we strike with the sword? And one of them, apparently not waiting for him to answer, struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

But Jesus answered and said, permit even this, and he touched his ear and healed him. Now, other gospels record also that it was Peter that actually cut off the ear. I'm not sure, but I think John is the only one who identifies it as Peter.

Is that correct, Frank? I think when it says one of them drew a sword, while this is recorded in other gospels, I'm pretty sure that John, I think John's the only one who mentions this was Peter. And perhaps the reason is that John's the only one who wrote his gospel after Peter had died. If Matthew, Mark, and Luke were all written during the lifetime of Peter, which seems likely to me, or at least very nearly within the lifetime of Peter, but I would say even within the lifetime of Peter, that would be the only reason for them to conceal his identity here.

Presumably, Peter taking a sword and resisting arrest and actually injuring one of the arresting party that were duly appointed by the powers that be to arrest him, this would be resisting arrest, this would be an illegal action. This would be, in one sense, that Jesus was numbered with the transgressors, that Peter was a transgressor. He's breaking any kind of a governmental law would forbid you to physically resist an arresting officer and injure him.

And Peter did this, but it was safer not to say it was him until perhaps after his death, and then John felt the liberty to do so. If Peter was alive during the time that Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote their gospels, it's better not to expose his crime in writing lest he be arrested. I don't suppose there was a statute of limitations in those days on crimes like that.

And the very fact that they don't mention it when they certainly knew it was him, suggest perhaps he was still alive and therefore vulnerable to prosecution at the time of writing. That would actually be an argument for an early date of writing of the other gospels. And this one, all of them except John.

Now, it's interesting, Luke says that they said, "'Shall we strike with a sword?' There were two swords among them. Peter maybe was the only one who drew his and did not wait for an answer and started hacking away." Now, if you're trying to defend against, you know, an army or soldiers or whatever, I mean, if you're going to take that approach, you're going to want to do more than just cut off somebody's ear. That's not really going to help that much in the situation.

If you're going to violently resist, you're going to want to try to kill somebody. And an ear as valuable as we might think of our ears being, it's not a vital organ. And therefore we have to assume that Peter was not exactly at the top of his game in swordsmanship at this point, probably because he just woke up.

He was probably disoriented. He was asleep and he just woke up. He grabs his sword, he sees there's a scuffle, starts swinging, but he doesn't have an awful lot of skill in the matter and manages to cut off a guy's ear.

We're told that the ear belonged to Malchus. The name is given in John's gospel. Here we're told it was the servant of the high priest.

And John agrees with that. In John's gospel, he says it was Malchus, the high priest's servant. Actually, it was a relative of this Malchus who accused Peter of being a disciple the third time when Peter denied Christ three times the third time, the identification of Peter as one of Jesus' disciples came from a relative of Malchus, this man who was injured.

Now, only Luke tells us that Jesus picked up the severed ear and put it back on his head. There is reference elsewhere in the gospels to this attack that Peter waged and to the injury, but Luke alone, I believe, is the one who tells us that Jesus went to the trouble of not only rebuking Peter, but also healing the man who was injured. Now, Luke, on the other hand, while giving that detail, leaves out considerable detail as to what Jesus said to Peter on this occasion.

Here, he said, permit even this. In other words, Peter, don't try to stop this, permit this to happen, which is essentially the same thing as put away your weapon and acquiesce to this situation. Now, other gospels tell us different things that Jesus said to Peter on this occasion.

And if you put together all the accounts, Jesus said a number of things, apparently, possibly, I mean, I don't know how long it took him to say each thing, but there's no reason he couldn't have said them all, and different gospels record different parts. One gospel records that he said, put away your sword. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword.

And it's very possible, I never had thought of this until I read A.B. Bruce's, the training of the 12, I think he's the one who pointed this out. I always just figured Jesus was saying, people shouldn't use weapons because they'll die doing that. Now, that is certainly true in many cases, but not every case.

Lots of times, people who defend themselves with weapons actually don't die for the simple reason that they defended themselves. Lots of people go to war with weapons and come home alive. Living by the sword doesn't always guarantee that you'll die by

the sword, and A.B. Bruce, I think it was, said, probably Jesus' words in this situation meant, he in this situation who seeks to survive by the sword is gonna get himself killed by the sword.

We're outnumbered here. Resistance is futile. You know, if you seek to be one who lives or survives by the use of your sword, this is not gonna work out well for you.

After all, you don't know how to hit a vital organ on your enemy. We've got armed soldiers coming out here against us. You're gonna die if you resist.

Don't resist. And therefore, his comment might not have been intended as a universal axiom because it wouldn't be true as a universal axiom. But in this situation, certainly it's a realistic assessment of the situation.

You try to fight, you're gonna die. Put away your sword. Now, also, Jesus said and gave as one of the reasons why Peter should not fight, he said, do you not think that I could ask the Father and he would send 12 legions of angels right now? So one reason Christians don't necessarily have to defend themselves is God has given his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.

And the angel of the Lord encamps about those who fear him. And the only way that you can be harmed while continuing in the will of God and trusting God would be if God allowed the angels to step aside and allow your enemies to get you. And Jesus saying, this could be prevented easy enough.

God's angels are more than adequate to defend me if that's his will. It isn't his will right now. So don't resist God's will.

And besides Peter, you'd die if you tried to defend me. The angels could do it and never get hurt. Why don't we just trust God in this matter? He's got plenty of resources to protect me if that's what he wants to do.

In another gospel, it says that Jesus said, the cup that my father has given me, shall I not drink it? Now that was the very subject he'd been praying about. He'd been praying three times that God would take the cup from him, would not give him this cup of suffering and death to drink. And finally, when the arresting party comes, Jesus is at peace with the fact that this cup is not going to be taken from him.

The arrival of these soldiers is pretty much the indicator that this is a problem that's not going to go away. And therefore God is giving him this cup after all. And he is acquiescing to it.

The cup that the father has given me, shall I not drink it? And this is truly the right attitude toward suffering. If you've prayed and you've done all you could responsibly to avoid unnecessary dangers and so forth, then to recognize the sovereignty of God in

presenting trials to you and difficulties, maybe even death, and say, well, this is the cup that God has given me, I can accept that. Like Job said to his wife, shall we accept only the good things from the hand of God and not the evil things also? It was a matter of acquiescence to God.

This is the place, I believe, of total peace, is when you can just acquiesce to God. It says in 1 Peter 2 about Jesus' reaction to his arrest and those who came against him. It says about Jesus in 1 Peter 2, verse 21 and following, for to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow his steps, who committed no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth, who when he was reviled, he did not revile again.

When he suffered, he did not threaten, but he committed himself to him who judges righteously. He did not take his own defense into his own hands. He did not call for 12 legions of angels.

He did not try to reject the cup that the Father's given. He just took the cup and committed himself into God's hands, which did, of course, result in him dying, but also resulted in him being risen from the dead and glorified. So committing yourself into God's hands doesn't mean you're not gonna go through a hard time.

Doesn't even mean you won't die, but at least if you do die, you've died in his hands because that's where you've placed yourself and that's the safest place to be, whether living or dead, is in the hands of God and that's what Jesus did. He accepted the cup, he acquiesced to this fate that he had prayed would go away. It didn't go away, so he recognized that what's more important is that God's will be done.

Now you might say, well, here's a case where Jesus' prayers were not answered because he prayed that the cup would pass. No, he said, if it is your will, let this cup pass, but not my will, but yours be done. He didn't pray just that he would escape these circumstances, he prayed rather that if it were possible in God's will that this would happen, but his ultimate prayer was that God's will would be done, not his.

And this is the right kind of attitude in prayer. There are people who say that you shouldn't ever pray that, especially if you're praying for something like healing, because they say it's always God's will to heal. You should never say, God, if it's your will, please heal my sickness or this person's sickness I'm praying for.

Don't ever say that because you're expressing lack of faith, you're expressing doubt, you're giving yourself an excuse not to believe by saying it might not be God's will, and so I'm gonna put that little caveat in there, if it's your will, so that I don't get too embarrassed if it doesn't happen, and I can just say, oh, it wasn't God's will, but some people say it always is God's will, and you should never put that caveat in there. It just expresses your own doubts about things. Just pray that they be well and believe it.

Well, that's not how Jesus prayed. By the way, we never have an example of Jesus praying for the sick anyway. He never prayed for the sick, he just healed them.

Likewise, the apostles, we never read of them praying for the sick, but we do see them healing them. But when it came to praying, it was always if it is your will. It's always thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus was certainly praying for something that he desired very greatly, a thing we might even think is a very good thing to ask for, that Jesus would survive. But that wasn't the best thing, and so Jesus wisely submitted his prayers to the will of God. Peter says in, excuse me, John says in 1 John 5 14, this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

So if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. That's the confidence we have. We don't have the confidence that he'll hear and answer our prayers if it's not according to his will.

So there's certainly nothing wrong with, in fact, there's everything right with saying if it is your will. Not my will, but your will be done. And that's how Jesus prayed.

I can hardly see how any Christian could say that's the wrong way to pray. Now, after Jesus healed the man's ear, in verse 52, then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and elders who had come to him, have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize me. Now, they didn't because they were afraid of the crowds.

He's just pointing out they're cowardice. If you had the courage of your convictions, if I had actually been a criminal, you'd have no problem with seizing me in public. The police will, they have no qualms about seizing a criminal who's guilty of a crime in public, even if it's a popular criminal.

Everyone can see that a man who commits crimes ought to be arrested, and you could hardly get too much disapproval from the crowds if I'm a guilty party of something. The fact that you didn't arrest me means that you'd never thought you had a good case against me, and I doubt that you have a better one now than you did yesterday when I was in the temple teaching. You come out against me as if I'm a criminal, but if I were, why didn't you arrest me when you had the opportunity? Many, many times, that's what he's saying.

He's pointing out their hypocrisy, and of course the fact that by the very fact that they are arresting him secretly at night where no one else is around, it's more or less an admission that they don't have any kind of supportable case against him, and they have to do that which no public opinion would support them doing. He says at the very end of verse 53, but this is your hour and the power of darkness. This statement is unique to

Luke.

The other gospels, well I should say Mark and Matthew, at this point do not have him saying this, but they have him saying, but the scripture must be fulfilled. That is, he's saying there's no rational reason for you to be arresting me, but it's happening because the scripture predicted that it would happen, and the scripture must be fulfilled, and then Matthew and Mark both say then his disciples fled and left him. Now, it would appear that they all left him because that is what is stated in the other gospels.

However, some of them must have just run into the bushes until the arresting party had cuffed him and were leading him away, and they felt it was safe to follow at a distance. Some of them may have just run away and kept running, never looked back, it would appear, but two disciples at least are seen as following him if at a distance. One was John, and we read about that only in the gospel of John, and the other was Peter, and we read about that in all the gospels.

All the gospels tell us that Peter followed, but not boldly, not heroically. He followed incognito. He followed just anonymously.

He was curious to see what happened, but he didn't want to identify himself as consciously interested in Jesus. He just wanted to blend into the crowd, find out what was gonna happen. John, on the other hand, didn't have any problem in John's gospel, it says that John, somehow his family was acquainted with the high priest, and he was able to get into the house of Caiaphas and be indoors and watch the proceedings.

He even invited Peter to come in, but Peter wouldn't come in, and Peter stayed outside, and that's where he got into his trouble, as we will read later on here. Well, not very much later on, we'll read about right away, verse 54. Then having arrested him, they led him and brought him to the high priest's house, and Peter followed at a distance.

Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them, and a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, this man was also with him, but he denied him, saying, woman, I don't know him. And after a little while, another saw him and said, you also are of them, but Peter said, man, I am not. Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, surely this fellow also was with him, for he is a Galilean, but Peter said, man, I do not know what you're saying, and immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.

And Peter went out and wept bitterly, and repented, I think we are to assume. Now these three denials on Peter's part are agreed upon, for the most part, in all three Gospels, they all agree that Peter denied Jesus three times in the course of the evening. John has

the first denial at one point in his narrative, and then later, after some other things are reported, mentions two other denials.

It's John who tells us that the last person to accuse Peter was a relative of Malchus, whose ear had been cut off. Otherwise, it's just someone else in Mark and Luke and Matthew. But there is one disparity in these, I think the only serious one, worthy of consideration, and that is that in Mark's Gospel, it indicates that the first two accusations were made by the same girl.

Now, Matthew and Luke, and for that matter, John, do not affirm this. In fact, Matthew and Luke seem to indicate it was somebody else. Matthew, I think, suggests it was another girl.

Whereas Luke has Peter responding to the second verse, saying, man, I am not. Presumably, it's a man he's speaking to. The differences here, I don't know what to say about.

I mean, the evangelical pattern is usually to find some way to make these not contradictory in the defense of a certain view of the inspiration of Scripture that evangelicals have adopted. The question, of course, is legitimately asked, the particular view of inspiration that evangelicals have adopted, is there any biblical basis for adopting it? We realize that the Bible is the authority about everything for us, and therefore, it's very tempting to say, therefore, there's not a single possible mistake anyone who wrote anything in the Bible could have made. He's inspired in the sense that a person doing automatic writing and channeling something is inspired.

The Bible never makes that claim for itself. Luke certainly doesn't make that claim about himself. He says he was a researcher and a historian, and he had good witnesses and good sources, and his understanding was thorough, and he decided he'd put things down in an orderly way.

There's certainly no suggestion on his part that he was infallible, only reliable. And we have no evidence from Mark or Luke that they felt, or John, for that matter, that they felt that there was something making them infallible when they wrote. The problem we have as evangelicals is we are extremists.

We react to liberals and others who say the Bible isn't reliable by saying, no, it's reliable. It's not only reliable, it's infallible. Well, okay, if it's infallible, that certainly brings it back into the realm of authoritative, but where in the Bible does it say that it's infallible? Is that a biblical belief, or is that a traditional belief of evangelicals? I've sometimes said that we raise an objection to Roman Catholics and their views about Mary.

They believe Mary was sinless. They believe Mary was immaculately conceived in the womb of her mother. They believe that she ascended into heaven at the end of her life.

None of these things are stated in the Bible, and we Protestants don't believe them. We recognize, though, that the reason Catholics do that is because of the very high regard they have for Mary. They can hardly resist making up more and more legends about her to underscore their great respect for her.

Evangelicals don't appreciate Catholics doing that with Mary, but evangelicals might be in danger of doing the same thing for the Bible, which we highly esteem. I esteem the Bible as, in all points, reliable, but at all points of importance. I sometimes have pointed out that Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1, made a statement like this.

He says, I thank God, he's talking about his ministry in Corinth. He says, I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius. Two verses later, he says, oh, that's right, I also did baptize the household of Stephanas, and if I baptized any others, I don't recall.

Now, that doesn't sound like the words of somebody who's claiming to be writing under some kind of inspiration. Paul never does claim to be writing under inspiration. Well, who makes that claim for him? And are we going to say that if Paul couldn't make a mistake and the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit must have made the mistake because Paul did make a mistake.

He said, I only baptized Crispus and Gaius. He corrects himself two verses later. So, oh, there were some others too.

Now, in saying that, he's not making himself unreliable. In fact, he's showing himself to be reliable. He forgot for a moment about the household of Stephanas, but because he's honest and doesn't want to mislead anyone, he corrected himself as soon as he remembered.

He says, I don't remember if there were others. These are the words not of a person who's writing under some kind of automatic writing, kind of an impulse. This is the writings of a man who's writing a letter to his friends and is an honest and knowledgeable and authoritative apostle.

But that's not the same thing as saying that he was incapable of making a mistake. He admits to having making a mistake right there. Now, I don't want that to stumble anyone about the Bible.

What I want is the truth. I don't want Catholic traditions about Mary and I don't want evangelical traditions about the Bible. I want the Bible's own teaching about itself because I'm a true evangelical.

Evangelicals say scripture only, sola scriptura. That means that evangelical traditions are no better than anyone else's traditions. We want the scripture.

And so I want to see what the scripture claims. The scripture does not claim, Luke certainly does not claim and nobody in the Bible makes the claim for him that he wrote under inspiration. He didn't need to.

He was thoroughly knowledgeable of his subject. He could tell the story very reliably without supernatural assistance. And if he did have supernatural assistance as evangelicals often assume, he didn't know about it and never claimed it nor did any other biblical writer claim it.

So how do we know about it? Where do we get the information if it's not in the Bible? You see, I think that we are very much freed up from embarrassment when we realize that the Bible claims certain things and we tend to claim other things about it. And you see, Christians have spent a great deal of their time I've done so myself for much of my life, putting out little fires where liberals who don't believe the Bible at all, they say, look, here's a contradiction between this and this. And some people have found like 900 contradictions in the Bible.

There's one book written by an evangelical that seeks to resolve 900 alleged contradictions in the Bible that skeptics have brought up. Well, this gets to be very, let's just say fatiguing to always have to show that there's no contradictions. Now, usually it's quite true, there's no contradiction.

I'd say of the 900 alleged contradictions, 890 of them are no contradiction whatsoever at all. And it's simply the skeptic trying to find fault where there is no fault. But there are times, and I think we're looking at one, where from time to time, this story was remembered differently.

Is it significant to our faith? Not to mine, unless we're talking about my faith in a particular view of infallibility, but my faith is in the Bible, not in some particular view of infallibility that some evangelicals assert is true. I believe the Bible is a reliable record. I believe it happened.

I don't know whether the second person who confronted Peter was a girl or a man. Matthew says a girl. Luke suggests a man.

Matthew suggests it was a different girl than the first one. Mark suggests it was the same girl. This is just the kind of thing that a person might not remember exactly correctly.

And it's a detail that is so unimportant that you could see why they wouldn't bother to try to remember it absolutely correctly. The issue is that Peter fulfilled the prediction of Jesus in denying Christ three times. And he did so three times because three people or three occasions occurred where he was given the opportunity to say, yes, I'm one of his disciples, but he cowardly said he wasn't.

And so really we have to face this. Now, if some clever evangelical can come up with an explanation of why these differences exist here, then I'll be willing to listen to it because I'm not looking for problems in the Bible. I'm looking to resolve problems in the Bible.

That's what I've always been committed to and I still am. But I'm not looking to wear blinders or blindfolds and pretend that something is so that isn't. There does seem to be a rather difficult, I would even say maybe impossible to resolve difference in these.

But once I acknowledge that, does that mean I can't trust Matthew, Mark or Luke anymore when they tell me that this man, Jesus, walked on water and healed the sick and raised the dead and cast out demons and died for our sins and said the things he said and rose from the dead? Obviously we have three, four very excellent independent witnesses confirming these things to be true. A detail here or there that's inconsequential that they differed on is not a problem except it is a problem to a certain theory about the Bible. The question is, should we re-examine our theories in light of the facts or should we defend our theories at all costs even if the Bible evidence doesn't support them? That's really the issue.

And if the Bible claimed that these men were writing under some kind of inspiration that gave them infallibility, then we'd really be under obligation to say, okay, there's some way this all works out. There's some way this second person is a guy and a woman and it's the same woman and a different woman. Well, I don't put myself in the position to have to do that.

I'd rather just say I trust all the gospels to be giving me a reliable account, but not necessarily remembering every detail the same. That's okay. And then you can relax more.

You don't have to worry about a skeptic saying, well, these two people didn't say exactly the same thing. Fair enough, they didn't. But they all said the same thing about all the important stuff.

And that means we have witnesses about these things about Jesus. If my faith rested very much on the identity of the second person who confronted Peter, I'd be in a crisis here. But I can't imagine why it would matter to me in the least, whether it was a boy, a girl, the same girl, a different girl.

I don't even know how that would be worthy of a moment's consideration, except in the defense of a hypothetical theory about what I think happened behind the scenes when the gospels were being written. That's, in other words, I'm against human tradition, even if it's the traditions of my own group. I'm just into truth and whatever the Bible says is true about itself, in other words.

If we take the gospels at face value, they claim to be records by people who knew what

they're talking about about a historical life of Jesus. I accept them at face value. That doesn't mean that a person can't remember wrongly whether it was a guy or a girl in this case.

The fact that they don't remember it the same means it's so unimportant to them, it wasn't one of those things they committed to exact memory, apparently. And by the way, I've known two or three people who saw the same event happen and were even in the same car watching it when it happened and even talked about it among themselves, and yet who later told the story and some details were a little different, but it was the same story. This is the way witnesses are in a court of law.

No two witnesses give all the facts the same unless they're colluding together, which is considered dishonest. The gospel writers were obviously not doing that. Now, verse 63, the men who held Jesus mocked him and beat him, and having blindfolded him, they struck him on the face and asked him, saying, prophecy, who is it that struck you? And many other things they blasphemously spoke against him.

As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, meaning really it was the chief priests in Sanhedrin, both chief priests and scribes came together and led him into their council, saying, if you are the Christ, tell us. But he said to them, if I tell you, you will by no means believe. And I also, if I also ask you, you will by no means answer me or let me go.

These last words, or let me go, are not in the oldest manuscripts. But they only have him saying, you will not answer me, I'm not gonna answer you. This was probably referring back to the fact that he had already attested them on this very thing.

They had said, by what authority do you do these things? He said, well, let me ask you a question first. The baptism of John, is that from heaven or from man? They said, we can't tell you. He said, then I can't tell you either.

You wanna answer my questions? Why should I answer yours? And he's saying the same thing. You're asking me questions? I don't have to answer you that. You won't believe me anyway.

And if I ask you, you don't answer. So, you know, turnabout's fair play here. Hereafter, the son of man will sit on the right hand of the power of God, he said.

And they all said, are you then the son of God? And he said to them, literally, say, you say that I am. The new King James puts in the word rightly, because you say that I am doesn't sound like a very direct answer. And so the new King James translators thought, well, there must have been something missing here.

He probably means you rightly say that I am. Well, that may be in fact what's implied, but Jesus didn't always give the kind of answers that are easily understood. In saying you

say that I am, he's not denying that he is nor affirming it.

He's saying, well, that's your testimony. You know, you're talking, you say, you ask me if I'm the son of God, those are your words. Actually, Jesus didn't go around saying that he was the son of God.

He was the son of God, but he didn't go around talking about it plainly. These people are the ones using the terminology, not him. You say that I am.

You know, you judge on that basis. You know, if you think that's tolerable or not, these are your words. And they said, what further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from his own mouth.

Now, by the way, in another gospel, I think it's Matthew, when they asked him, are you the son of God? He said, I am. So he did not refrain from confirming that he was the son of God. He did verbally do that.

But this particular statement, you say that I am, does not necessarily affirm it in itself. He's apparently saying, you know, he could be even implying, you've noticed, huh? You ask him if I'm the son of God, well, you must've noticed, because you're saying it. I am in fact, the son of God.

And even you are saying that now. You're the ones, you know, framing that theory. I don't know exactly why he said, you say that I am.

It's always been a perplexing thing. And so perplexing enough that the new King James Chancellors felt they had to change it a little bit to make it less perplexing. Now, this encounter between verses 66 and 71, we get the impression that this was his, you know, first hearing before the Sanhedrin.

It actually was his third hearing before the Sanhedrin. If you compare the different gospel accounts, you find that Jesus stood trial six times from the time he was arrested to the time he was crucified. Most of the gospels don't record all of them, but John's gospel, I think it's John's, maybe it's, it may not be John's.

I think it's John's gospel tells us that when he was first arrested, he first was brought to Annas, the high priest. Now, Annas was not the official high priest. The Romans had removed him and put his son-in-law Caiaphas in his place.

But the Jews still respected Annas more than Caiaphas. So when they had caught their man that they'd been plotting against for years, they first brought their trophy to Annas to show him off and say, look, Annas, we got him. And there was some kind of thing that went on there.

We don't know what it was. It may have been very brief. No doubt, Annas had some

words with Jesus, maybe some interrogation, we don't know.

All we know is they first went to Annas. Then they took him from there and they went to an ad hoc gathering in the middle of the night of the Sanhedrin under Caiaphas at his house. It is at Caiaphas' house that Peter was out in the courtyard and denied Jesus those three times.

Caiaphas was the acting high priest and therefore the president of the Sanhedrin. And so the Sanhedrin gathered, perhaps not all of them, probably just a quorum of them. And there were some among them that disagreed with the opinion, the majority opinion, one of whom is identified for us later on in chapter 23.

And that was Joseph of Arimathea. We're told he was a member of the council who didn't agree with the general verdict of the council against Jesus. He was a man who looked for the kingdom of God and apparently thought that Jesus was the right place to look for it.

And he objected. So did Nicodemus, we have reason to believe, because John's gospel tells us that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both of them members of the Sanhedrin, sided with Jesus and took his body and gave it an honorable burial. Though he had died as a criminal and might be expected to have his body thrown in a ditch, they wanted him to be properly buried in an honorable way.

So there were members of the council that night who did not go along with the majority vote. And they may have even voiced their objections. We don't have a transcript of the proceedings of the court.

And so we don't know how many witnesses spoke up in favor of Jesus, but some of the gospels say that they hired false witnesses to testify against him. And the false witnesses said, we heard him say he's going to destroy the temple in three days, raise it up. But in other accounts, it says, but even though they paid these witnesses, they couldn't get the witnesses to even say the same thing as each other.

So really the proceedings broke down. I think it's Matthew, but I'm not going to go looking. One of the gospels indicates that after the first hearing before the Sanhedrin, there was a recess and the Sanhedrin plotted among themselves how they could get him killed.

And they reconvened around dawn. Here it says, as soon as it was day. Now this is a little difficult because I believe that John's gospel is going to tell us that they were standing before Pilate at six in the morning.

And six in the morning is essentially daybreak. Nonetheless, it is possible that they had a very quick meeting at daybreak, as soon as it was day, made their final decision and took him to Pilate and they got there around six in the morning. They were in a hurry, obviously.

But this gathering that we read of here, where they actually condemned him rather than just hearing testimony against him, they actually made a verdict, was the third time that he had stood before Pilate the high priest and the high priest's sympathizers. Annas first, then once with Caiaphas leading and then this third time with Caiaphas. Now what happened here that Luke doesn't go into in detail, they couldn't get the false witnesses to say the same thing.

Now you might say, why couldn't they? Well, apparently they didn't do witness preparation and the witnesses had to not hear each other. That would be, of course, they couldn't have a trial where the witnesses are called up who'd been hearing each other's testimony. You've got to keep the witnesses out of the picture while the others are talking so they don't deliberately say the same things.

They apparently hired false witnesses to say bad things about Jesus that didn't tell them exactly what to say. Or even if they did tell him to say certain things, under cross-examination, these witnesses unprepared would say things that differed from what other witnesses said. So they just couldn't get two witnesses.

Now the law of Moses is very emphatic. Only by the mouth of two witnesses could someone be condemned of anything. So this kind of procedure failing, the high priest just said, okay, let's forget about the witnesses.

Let me talk to the man. Are you the Messiah or not? Are you the Son of God or not? And eliciting this way, an actual confession from Jesus that he was, they said, why do we need witnesses? We don't need two witnesses to agree. We've just all heard him with our own ears.

He's blasphemed. Now this is interesting because there is no precedent in Jewish law that we know of for calling someone a blasphemer for being called either the Messiah. Many Jews were called the Messiah.

They got killed by the Romans, but not by their fellow Jews. It wasn't blasphemy to call yourself a Messiah. Or to call yourself even the Son of God.

Jesus pointed that out. Even your own scriptures call people gods and certainly sons of God too. So why do you want to stone me? Because I call myself God.

Or I call myself the Son of God, he says. And this is in John chapter 10. There was no court precedent for what Jesus said being regarded as blasphemy.

They just decided, we're tired of all this. We're going to call that blasphemy. How many of you guys agree? And there was a show of hands or whatever.

And the majority agreed, yeah, we'll call that blasphemy. He's worthy of death. And that's where they stood at the end of chapter 22.

Going into 23, there's a major turning point in the trial of Jesus. Because they have to take him to the Romans. Why? Because the Jews were not allowed under Roman law to kill any capital criminal.

When Rome had conquered that region, they did allow the Jews some degree of autonomy. They did allow the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jews, made up of the elders of Israel, they allowed them to make a lot of the rules and laws and enforcement and so forth. They did withhold one right from the Sanhedrin.

They could not exercise capital punishment. They needed to have Roman authority for that. The Jews were not allowed to just go out and kill people.

After all, if they were given that authority, they might arrest Roman soldiers and accuse them of blasphemy and kill them, who knows? That's just not something the Sanhedrin was allowed to do. Now it's true that they did stone Stephen without Roman authority. And the Jews in Jerusalem in the end of the book of Acts also were about to kill Paul when the Romans intervened.

This doesn't mean that they were allowed to do it. It means that they were as a mob action. And very probably, after stoning Stephen, they dispersed quickly enough that before the Romans could arrive and see who was the guilty parties, it was all done.

But the truth is that the Romans didn't give them authority to kill people for blasphemy or any other crime. If a person committed a capital crime and the Jews thought he should be put to death, then they had to go get the Roman permission to do that. So now the Jews in their court have found Jesus worthy of death, but they can't do anything about it without Roman approval.

They've got to go to Pilate. He's the Roman official. They got to persuade him that Jesus has done something worthy of death so that Pilate will have him executed.

The problem is they had no way of finding Jesus worthy of death except by pretending that he was a blasphemer. And what would Pilate care about that? The Jews wanted to kill blasphemers. Pilate couldn't care less about Jewish blasphemers.

He'd probably join them in blasphemy. He didn't care about the Jewish God. He didn't care about reverence for Yahweh.

He wouldn't see a person who blasphemed Yahweh as someone worthy of death. That's not a Roman concern. So we've got a problem.

The Jews have a huge problem here. First of all, it took them a long time to find any way even to condemn him by their own sentiments because he hadn't done anything that broke the law in a manner that they could say, we should kill him for that. But by their interpretation, something he said could be called blasphemy and that gave them all they

needed, or at least they decided that was all they needed because they weren't going to get anything more than that.

So they have decided, yes, he's worthy of death, yay. We finally got a verdict against him. Now, oh yeah, now we got another problem.

We can't kill him. Pilate has to kill him. We've got to persuade Pilate that this man is a danger to Rome because Pilate couldn't care less if Jesus was a danger to the Jews.

Hardly anyone was more of a danger to the Jews than Pilate himself. He didn't care people who were a danger to the Jews. He would be concerned only about people who are a danger to Caesar and his interests.

And so we're going to find that chapter 23, they bring him to Pilate. Now, I mentioned Jesus stood trial six times in that night. Three of them were before the Jews, Annas once, Caiaphas in the court twice.

He also stood trial three times before Roman authorities. He stood before Pilate. Then he was sent to Herod and stood before him.

Then he was sent back to Pilate. He had two trials before Pilate and one before Herod. These were Roman authorities.

And these trials were in order to get Roman sanction for his crucifixion. And it's interesting, they did not find Pilate agreeable. And that is perplexing at one level, but it's explainable.

I think once we think of some, all that was involved, I'll talk about that in our next session. But Luke alone tells us that there was also trial before Herod. The other gospels, you would get the impression from reading them that he only had a trial before Pilate in the Roman courts, but Luke gives us a unique bit of information.

That is that Pilate finding Jesus to be not an easy case to handle. Was glad to find out that Jesus was a Galilean and that he said that was Herod's jurisdiction, sent him to Herod, but Herod sent him back to Pilate. Anyway, that comes up in the next chapter.

But you'll see when we come to the beginning of the next chapter, they don't bring Jesus to Pilate and say, we have found this man guilty of blasphemy. He needs to die. They changed the charges 100% and the charges they changed to are entirely fabricated.

In fact, they're lies. Interesting that they didn't feel that they would accuse him in their own courts of things they knew to be lies. They had to have either witnesses or their own hearing him blasphemy.

They wouldn't just make up a charge entirely and accept that but they would be willing to entirely fabricate false charges to the Romans. Perhaps the Jews, because of their

hatred for the Romans, felt like the Romans aren't worthy of knowing the truth anyway. We're on God's mission.

This is theocratic tact on our part. Theocratic tact is a term derived from the Jehovah's Witnesses who also believe it's okay to lie as long as it's going to promote the interests of their religion. And so apparently the Jews in this case believed in theocratic tact.

That is lie, if you must, to promote the interests of your religion. And the interest of their religion, they felt was to get rid of this blasphemer or more properly this person who is threatening their position of power. And so they came to the Jews They didn't admit that that was their motive but that certainly was.

Even Pilate knew it because I believe it's in Matthew, it says that Pilate knew that it was because of jealousy that they brought Jesus to him. So he wasn't fooled by their motives, but they come and bring political charges against Jesus, which not only are not true but are the opposite of the truth. And so these are really unscrupulous knaves that are running Israel's religious system at this particular time.

No wonder they needed to be replaced. And they were, Jesus and his disciples. The kingdom of God was taken from the others and given to them, to a nation that would bring forth the fruits of it, which includes justice.

The Jews and their courts were not just. Actually, the Roman courts were more just than the Jews' courts. And we see Pilate not willing, initially, not willing to condemn Jesus without him being guilty of something.

Although he got intimidated, he got blackmailed, actually, is what happened, and so he caved in. But he was more willing to hold out for some evidence that Jesus had done some crime than the Jews were. You know, when Paul was before the Jewish court, actually it was the Jews wanting him to be surrendered to their courts by Festus, he was asked, are you willing to go down to Jerusalem, be tried by these people? He said, no, I want to go be tried before Caesar.

I expect more justice from the pagan Nero than I do from these religious rulers in my country. And he was wise to do so. They would have killed him.

Caesar didn't, as Nehuser can tell, not immediately. So there's a certain irony in Luke's writings, and the Gospels in general, that here the people of God, the Jews, they had fewer scruples, less justice in their courts than even the Romans who were pagans and didn't profess to even believe in God. And so we'll find that Pilate and Herod are not really good guys, not at all, but they're not as bad as the Jewish rulers that Jesus had to deal with.

And so we find the false charges of another sort brought against him in another kind of trial waged against Jesus in the next chapter.

