

“Why Do the Gospel Accounts Contradict Each Other?”

I understand that if 4 people saw an accident, they would each have a different story. You said that was why Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John had slightly different accounts of the resurrection. But isn't all of the Bible inspired by God? Didn't He tell those four guys what to write? And also, some parts still seem a bit different... like inside of the tomb... how many angels were there and did they sit or stand? I know that's probably not very significant, but it still bothers me.

Yes, the four gospel writers are inspired of God and provide different but not contradictory details of the life of Jesus. Inspiration does not mean they must have identical accounts. Inspiration means they have different but not contradictory accounts. When put together, they complement nicely and fill in details the others leave out. Let's consider the example of an accident. If one witness stands to the north side of the accident, he sees the accident from his vantage point. Now the other witness stands on the south side, the opposite side of the street, he sees different details because of his angle. Now would both men have identical accounts? Of course not, the one on the south side cannot see what happens on the north side of the accident nor can the man on the north side see what happens on the south side. However, when you put the two accounts together, you get a more complete picture of the accident. Both men include different details but they should not be contradictory.

That is what we have in the gospels. The writers include *different*, but not *contradictory*, details. Inspiration does not mean the four gospels must be identical in every way. That would be quite boring to read four accounts that are exactly the same. Each writer includes details he feels are necessary for the audience he is addressing. Matthew, writing to the

Jews, must include all the Old Testament prophecies, while Mark, writing to the Greeks, does not include many prophecies but writes on the action of Jesus' life. Is that a contradiction? No, it's just that each writer included details he felt were necessary and left out others he felt would not be necessary for his audience. Alleged contradictions are explained when one studies the accounts and puts each event of Christ in its chronological order.

Matthew records one angel, Luke and John record two. The answer is this. Where there are two there must be one. Get it? There were two angels at the tomb but Matthew only writes about one in his account. Is this a contradiction? No, because where there are two, there must be at least one. Luke includes two, but Matthew only includes the one that spoke with Mary. He keyed in on that one and left the other angel out. Luke and John include the other one. We do that in our reporting. If Clinton and Gore appear on the podium but only Clinton talks and Gore says nothing, some newspapers will say "Clinton appeared and said such and such" and not mention Gore. Other papers will say, "Clinton and Gore appeared and Clinton stated ...". Is there a contradiction? No, just some reporters mentioned one person while another chose not to.

Hope this helps. Keep studying the word!

Patrick Zukeran
Probe Ministries

"Where is the REAL Eyewitness

Account of the Resurrection?"

I read your article ["Evidence that Jesus Didn't Become the Christ Till Centuries Later?"](#) You cited two or three historians but no eye-witness accounts. I wonder if you can provide me with an eye witness account of someone (e.g. Pontius Pilate) who was alive at the time of the resurrection and within five years wrote an account of that (considering people forget details and add details with time). I understand that the gospels cannot be taken as eye-witness accounts as the first one wasn't written till maybe 40 years after Jesus' death, and supposedly the original copy doesn't exist.

Along with most other conservative scholars, I actually do believe that the Gospels contain eyewitness testimony about the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. Many conservative scholars hold that the Gospel of Mark was written as early as the 50's or 60's of the first century. Furthermore, there is evidence from Mark's passion narrative that he may have relied on a source dating to within seven years of Jesus' crucifixion.

It's true that we do not have the original manuscripts of any New Testament book. However, we have copies dating to the early second century and later. Also, it's worth saying that we don't have the original manuscripts for ANY book of the ancient world (not Plato, Aristotle, Tacitus, Pliny, Josephus, etc.). The New Testament manuscripts that we do possess are both earlier and more numerous than is true for any other book of antiquity.

Finally, about a non-Christian eyewitness source dating to within five years of Jesus' death. There is none. The earliest non-Christian writings we have are probably those of Josephus, the Jewish historian, who was writing near the end of the first century.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“Can We Trust Wescott and Hort’s Work on the Greek Text?”

I have heard much of the KJV-only debate and have read Probe’s articles [“The Debate Over The King James Version”](#) and [“Which Version Of The Bible Is Most Accurate?”](#). I thought I had this issue settled in my mind until I heard Pastor Chuck Smith say that Wescott and Hort seemed to be unsaved based on comments he quoted from their writings. I need to know if the beliefs of Wescott and Hort are compatible with that of evangelical Christianity and where a “layman” can obtain source information that can be trusted and understood.

The question of Westcott and Hort’s orthodoxy has come up a few times in the past, but I haven’t pursued it. If they were the only New Testament scholars who endorsed the text which underlies the newer translations, we might have reason to hold them suspect. But they aren’t. Conservative scholarship has been behind the newer translations such as the NASB, the NIV, and the ESV (English Standard Version).

A helpful Web site which has a number of articles on the subject of textual criticism is www.skypoint.com/~waltzmn/.

Rick Wade
Probe Ministries

“Why is Jesus called ‘the Everlasting Father’ in Isaiah 9:6?”

Why is Jesus called “the Everlasting Father” in Isaiah 9:6?

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor,
The mighty God,
The everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace.*

The phrase “Everlasting Father” looks confusing, doesn’t it? It shouldn’t be taken literally, especially since Jesus the Son is not God the Father. The key is to understand the term “father” as “kingly protector of his people,” which was used in both biblical (for example, see Isaiah 22:21 and Job 29:16) and non-biblical literature. And we Americans are used to hearing George Washington called “the father of our country,” but it’s certainly not saying he sired all Americans! It’s a figurative term that describes a great leader.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Did the Bible Get Divided into Chapters and Verses?”

How Did the Bible Get Divided into Chapters and Verses?

I'm glad you asked! Many people don't realize that the original biblical documents were written without these artificial divisions, which turn out to be unfortunate in some places, with context apparently ignored. For example, the creation account of Genesis 1 ends with verse 31: “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” The chapter division ends before the end of the story of Creation Week; it would certainly make more sense to put 2:1-3 with the rest of Genesis 1:

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.

2:2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

2:3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.



You may be surprised to learn that the Bible was not divided this way until the Middle Ages. However, if you've ever seen a medieval illuminated manuscript (with the colorful and gilded artwork), you'll note there are no verse

numbers on these magnificent pieces of art.

The Hebrew Old Testament was divided into verses by Rabbi Nathan in 1448.^{1} Stephen Langton (c 1150-1228), an Archbishop of Canterbury, is believed to be the first person to divide the Bible into defined chapters.^{2}

Robert Estienne (1503-1559), also known as Robert Stephens or Stephanus, was a 16th century printer in Paris. He divided the New Testament into verses, and was the first to print the Bible divided into standard numbered verses in 1555.^{3} In 1560, the Geneva Bible, an English translation of the Bible made by the English exiles in Geneva, first divided the entire Bible into the verses that we still use today.^{4}

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

Notes

1.

www.worldinvisible.com/library/kenyon/storyofbible/2ck05.htm

2. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Langton

3. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Estienne

4. www.learnthebible.org/Divisions%20of%20the%20Bible.htm

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“Was Man Created Twice, in

Genesis 1 and Genesis 2?"

Why does it seem like man was created twice? Once in Genesis 1:27 and a second time in 2:7.

My own view is this. Genesis 1 is an overview of the entire creation event. Genesis 2 is a more detailed and specific description of God's creation of mankind. Thus, whereas Genesis 1 mentions the creation of man only briefly, Genesis 2 goes into significantly more detail. The two accounts are not contradictory, but complementary. Genesis 2 simply elaborates on the creation of man in particular.

An excellent website that deals with all sorts of biblical and theological issues is The Biblical Studies Foundation at www.netbible.com/index.htm. I use this site quite often and regularly recommend it to others as well.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

"Was Isaiah Written by Two Authors?"

I was told in an Old Testament class that Isaiah was written by two authors. Is this true and if it is does that change the validity of the prophecies in the book?

Also, I have always believed that the gospels were found in

different places but were in harmony. Is this true or what were the origins of the gospels?

I am a Christian but have been beating myself up trying to find answers to all of these questions I have.

Thanks for writing Probe Ministries. It is a very common view among moderate to liberal biblical scholars that Isaiah had two authors. Indeed, some even believe that there were three (or more) authors of this book. A disbelief in the validity of predictive prophecy may well be one of the reasons for adopting this view. However, I personally am persuaded that this view is incorrect. One conservative scholar makes the following points:

1. There is predictive prophecy in Isaiah 1-39 (often attributed to the "first" Isaiah who lived prior to the Babylonian Captivity). Thus, one does not escape predictive prophecy simply by asserting that chapters 40-66 were written later in history by another author. For instance, Isaiah 7:16, 8:4 and others are prophecies which were fulfilled shortly after they were given, whereas 9:1-2 is a prophecy about the coming of Messiah (fulfilled hundreds of years after it was given). Such examples could be multiplied.

2. Although there are some differences in the literary style of chapters 1-39 and 40-66, this does not at all mean that the entire book could not have been written by one person. After all, if such standards were applied to the works of Shakespeare or Milton, we would have to deny that they wrote much of what is attributed to them. Clearly, the same author can make use of diverse literary forms.

3. There are also similarities between both sections of Isaiah. For instance, compare 11:6-9 (allegedly by first Isaiah) with 65:25 (allegedly by second Isaiah). Other passages could be mentioned. Such passages argue as persuasively for a single author as any differences might

argue for two authors.

4. Most importantly (in my view) is the New Testament use of Isaiah. First, quotations from chapters 40-66 (allegedly from “second” Isaiah) are simply attributed to Isaiah (see Matthew 3:3 and Acts 8:28-33 for just two examples). Second, in John 12:37-41, there are quotations from Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10, and both are attributed to the same Isaiah who saw the glory of the Lord (John 12:41).

Thus, I think there are good reasons for believing that there was only one author of the book of Isaiah.

Concerning the Gospels, I will certainly admit that there are some difficulties in harmonizing them on all points. However, I do think it’s possible to harmonize them in large part. Also, it’s important to remember that sometimes problems are resolved with the discovery of new data from archaeology, history and the like. This has happened many times in the past and will likely happen more in the future.

I take the traditional view on the origins of the Gospels. Namely, that Matthew and John were written by the apostles of those names, that Mark was written with eyewitness testimony supplied by the Apostle Peter, and that Luke was written by the physician, who thoroughly researched the subject before writing (see Luke 1:1-4). All of the Gospels were written in the first century, probably between the dates of the mid-50’s to early 60’s for Mark and the 90’s for John.

Hope this information helps put your mind at ease a bit.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“What About the Witch of Endor Calling Up Samuel’s Spirit?”

I just read the [Animism](#) article. It states that Christianity specifically teaches against the existence of ghosts (spirits of dead people) in the world, and that dead people cannot communicate with the living and vice versa. What about the passage in I Samuel 28 with Saul and the witch of Endor? She calls up Samuel’s spirit to communicate with Saul.

The incidence in 1 Samuel 28 is one of two exceptions to the “no crossing over” boundaries in scripture, both highly supernatural miracles. The witch of Endor had no power to truly conjure up the spirits of dead people; that’s why she screamed in terror when Samuel actually appeared. It was God at work, not the witch or even the departed prophet responding to the summons. Samuel gave the word of the Lord to Saul, and his prophecy was fulfilled shortly thereafter.

The other miracle was when Moses and Elijah appeared along with a transfigured Christ to Peter, James and John (Matt. 17). The disciples did not summon the spirits of these dead saints; they were sent by the Father (probably to encourage the Lord Jesus).

The fact that there are two biblical exceptions, both of which required divine intervention to send departed spirits into this world, does not affect the truth that there is a “great gulf fixed” between the living and the dead (Luke 16:26). That’s the point of miracles: they are God-powered exceptions.

Hope this helps!

“Is There a Specific Reference to Heaven or Hell in the OT?”

Is there any specific reference to Heaven or Hell in the Old Testament or did this notion emerge solely as a result of the Persians' Zoroastrian influence on the Jews?

The OT contains numerous references to heaven. Many of these refer to the physical heavens (Gen. 1:1, Psalm 19:1, etc.). Nevertheless, there do also seem to be a number of references to heaven as the dwelling place of God (1 Kings 8:30, Psalm 11:4, etc.).

As for the term “hell,” it depends on which English translation you consult. The KJV, for instance, translates the Hebrew term “Sheol” as “hell.” The NASB, on the other hand, simply renders this term “Sheol.” The NIV translates this term in a variety of ways: the grave, death, the depths, etc., depending on the context. Strictly speaking, sheol (the Hebrew term) does not refer to hell in my judgment. It might refer to Hades (i.e., a temporary place of punishment for the unrighteous dead between death and resurrection) in some contexts. But hell, as I understand it, is properly understood as the second death, the Lake of Fire, the place of eternal punishment. And this is not true of either Sheol or Hades (see Revelation 20:13-15). Thus, the Hebrew term Sheol can, in certain contexts, be used in a manner similar to the NT term Hades (e.g. Job 26:6; etc.), but I personally don't think it

refers to hell (strictly speaking).

I do not think it's necessary to suppose that Zoroastrianism was solely responsible for the NT doctrines of heaven and hell. In the first place, the OT does refer to heaven as the dwelling place of God, distinct from the physical universe. For another, the OT concept of Sheol is often used to refer to the place of the dead (i.e., the place of the dead between death and resurrection). This actually parallels the NT doctrines of Abraham's Bosom or Paradise and Hades (see Luke 16:19-31). In the OT, Sheol was apparently a place for both the righteous and unrighteous dead. It may have been a place of rest for the righteous and a place of torment for the unrighteous. However, in the course of progressive revelation, we have been given a clearer vision of the afterlife (including the eternal state) in the NT. Thus, I think this can be easily explained in terms of progressive revelation, rather than as borrowing from Zoroastrianism.

In case you're interested, I have written a [previous reply about Zoroastrianism](#). Although this reply is attempting to answer some questions other than what you've asked about, it may nonetheless be of benefit to you.

I hope this helps.

Sincerely in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

Probe Ministries

“Why Isn't Jesus Called

Joshua?"

I was born of Jewish parents, but never confirmed in the Jewish faith. I was baptized at a Billy Graham rally in 1952.

I have questioned why writings about Jesus in the first century have not used his correct name ("Joshua" in English). He would have been known as "Joshua ben Joseph." He was a teacher (Rabbi) who taught a reformed Judaism, later to be called Christianity. He is believed to be the Messiah (Christ in Greek).

I believe that the omission of these facts in most writings about him have influenced many minds in the wrong direction, such as anti Jewish sentiments.

What say you?

As you probably know, first century accounts of Jesus were written in Greek using the term Ἰησοῦς [*Iesous*] which in fact does translate back to the Hebrew name Joshua meaning Yahweh is salvation. We get the English name Jesus from the Latin translation of the Greek manuscripts by Jerome in the early 5th century. The typical Jewish naming convention Jesus (Joshua) son of Joseph is used in Luke 4:22 and in John, but the Greek-speaking gentiles preferred titles with theological implications and moved quickly towards Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus. Since Jesus and Joseph were common names in the first century, early Christians sought to differentiate their Jesus by using Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus, son of David, and of course Jesus, Son of God.

As to whether or not this contributed to anti-Jewish sentiments is difficult to say. Anti-Semitism, like most social phenomena, is probably the result of a combination of causes. However I admit that if more people understood and appreciated the Jewishness of Jesus it might serve to ameliorate hostility towards Jews.

Sincerely,

Don Closson

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