

Appendix

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1) How Often Did Jesus Say Peter Would Deny Him?

The question can be understood in two different senses, and I wish to explore them both. How often was Peter to deny the Lord, and how often did the Lord warn him? I will consider the second question first. Each Gospel records a warning—the relevant passages are Matthew 26:30-35, Mark 14:26-31, Luke 22:31-34, 39 and John 13:36-38, 18:1. For reasons that will presently become apparent, I will start to discuss the passages in reverse order.

How Many Warnings?

First, John 13:36-38:

36 Simon Peter says to Him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but later you will follow me”. 37 Peter says to Him: “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for your sake!” 38 Jesus answered him: “You will lay down your life for my sake? Most assuredly I say to you, no rooster can crow until you have denied me three times!”¹

Notice the distinctive context that leads into our Lord’s warning. Notice also the emphatic nature of His declaration—by employing a double negative (in the Greek text) He leaves no question but that three denials will take place before the first rooster crows from that moment on. Notice finally where and when this exchange took place. They were in the upper room where they had gathered to observe the Passover. Evidently this conversation between the Lord and Peter came comparatively early in the proceedings, because it was followed by the contents of chapters 14, 15, 16 and 17 before they left the room and went to the garden on the Mount of Olives (18:1).

Second, Luke 22:31-34:

31 Then the Lord said, “Simon, Simon, indeed Satan has asked for you (pl) that he may sift you as wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you (sg) that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to me strengthen your brothers.” 33 But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death!” 34 So He said, “I tell you, Peter, no rooster can crow this day before you will deny three times that you know me!”

Notice again the distinctive context that leads into our Lord’s warning. It is clearly different from that given in John 13. Notice also that there seems to be an increase in the intensity of their exchange. There is a note of reproach in Peter’s speech, and the use of Peter’s name gives a stern note to the Lord’s response. The addition of “today” (compared to John 13) and the shifting of “thrice” to an emphatic position (in the Greek text—again as compared to John) contribute to the feeling of heightened intensity. Also, now Peter will deny that he even knows Him. Note finally where and when this exchange took place. They were still in the upper room, but this conversation evidently came near the end of the proceedings,

¹ The emphasis here is on the obligatory absence of any cockcrow until Peter has denied [at least] three times. There is no definite article with ‘rooster’, so it is “a rooster”; the negative is double, therefore emphatic, “absolutely not”. If you have lived where there were a number of roosters, you know that one or another can sound off at any time, and some one of them will crow almost on the hour throughout the night, while at dawn they put on a chorus. It was probably somewhere around 9 p.m. when Jesus issued this warning, and Peter’s first denial probably happened at least five hours later. For not a single rooster to crow anywhere within earshot during that time required supernatural intervention—which is why I render “no rooster can crow” (if an angel can close lions’ mouths [Dan. 6:22], closing roosters’ beaks would be a cake walk).

because only the contents of verses 35-38 intervened before they left the room and went to the Mount of Olives (22:39). Of course, more may have actually happened than is recorded in 22:35-38, but it seems clear that the warning recorded in Luke is not the same as the one recorded in John, and that the one in John happened first.

I find a comparison of the two warnings in Greek to be impressive and convincing:

John 13:38: “Τὴν ψυχὴν σου ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ θήσεις? Ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, οὐ μὴ ἀλεκτῶρ φωνῆσῃ ἕως οὗ ἀπαρηγήσῃ με τρίς.”

Luke 22:34: “Λέγω σοι, Πέτρε, οὐ μὴ φωνῆσῃ σημερον ἀλεκτῶρ πρὶν ἢ τρίς ἀπαρηγήσῃ μὴ εἶδεναι με.”

Really, there is no comparison; they are obviously different (even taking into account that they probably spoke Hebrew, so we are looking at a translation). As in John, here again we have a plain affirmation that three denials [at least] will take place before the first rooster crows.

Third, Matthew 26:30-35:

30 And after hymn-singing they went out to the Mount of Olives. 31 Then Jesus says to them, “All of you will be caused to stumble because of me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered’.

32 But after I am raised I will go before you to Galilee.” 33 Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if everyone *else* is caused to stumble because of you, **I** will never be caused to stumble!” 34 Jesus said to him, “Assuredly I say to you that this night, before *any* rooster crows, you will deny me three times!” 35 Peter says to Him, “Even if I have to die with you, I will **not** deny you!” All the *other* disciples said the same.

Notice that this exchange took place after they had left the upper room and were on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Again the context is distinct from that in Luke or John—here the Lord begins by warning all the disciples. Peter counters by contradicting Him. The Lord’s reiterated specific warning to Peter contains no new elements except that now it is “this very night”. Peter contradicts again, using a double negative for emphasis—he ‘has his back up’ and is starting to get impertinent. It seems clear that Matthew records a third warning to Peter, subsequent to those in Luke and John.

Fourth, Mark 14:26-31:

26 And after hymn-singing they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 And Jesus says to them, “All of you will be caused to stumble because of me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered’.

28 But after I am raised I will go before you to Galilee.” 29 But Peter said to Him, “Even if all are caused to stumble, yet I will not be!” 30 And Jesus says to him, “Assuredly I say to you that you, today, even this night, before a rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times!” 31 But he spoke the more vehemently, “If I have to die with you, I will certainly not deny you!” And they all said the same.

The first four verses are virtually identical with the parallel passage in Matthew, so we evidently have the same time and place in both. But now we come to verse 30, the despair of those who defend scriptural inerrancy and the delight of their opponents. Our Lord’s statement here differs in several ways from that in Matthew 26:34 but the main problem is

the word “twice”. What are we to say: Are Matthew 26:34 and Mark 14:30 contradictory accounts of the same warning?

Before settling for that explanation, the precise turn of phrase in Mark 14:30 invites our attention. I believe it will help to see a word for word rendering of what Jesus said.

“Assuredly I say to you that you, today, this very night, before twice a rooster crows, thrice you will deny me.” The Lord’s declaration here seems quite sharp. There is extraordinary emphasis on the second “you”. “Twice” is also heavily emphasized. How are we to account for such severity? Peter’s effort in verse 29 scarcely seems to merit such a reaction—the reaction recorded in Matthew 26:34 seems much more appropriate. And what shall we say to Mark 14:31? Peter’s words here are virtually identical to those in Matthew 26:35 but they are introduced by “but he spoke the more vehemently”. Why the vehement reiteration?

I suggest that the solution is to read the following sequence. Matthew 26:30-35^a then Mark 14:30-31:

Jesus: “All of you will be caused to stumble because of me this night . . .”

Peter: “Though all are caused to stumble because of you, I will never be caused to stumble.”

Jesus: “Assuredly I say to you that this night, before any rooster crows, you will deny me three times.”

Peter: “Even if I have to die with you I will certainly not deny you!”

Jesus: “Assuredly I say to you that you, today, this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.”

Peter, more vehemently: “If I have to die with you, I will certainly not deny you!”

In other words, Mark omitted the exchange recorded in Matthew 26:34-35^a while Matthew omitted the exchange recorded in Mark 14:30-31^a. (The editorial comment “and they all said the same” comes at the end of the whole episode.)

On three separate occasions Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Him [at least] three times before a rooster crowed during that night. Peter’s responses became increasingly belligerent until after the third warning he even contradicted the Lord with an emphatic double negative (Mat. 26:35). Finally the Lord lost His patience, as it were, and said in effect, “Listen, not only will you deny me three times before a rooster crows once, you will deny me another three times before a rooster crows twice!” For answer Peter repeats his prior statement even more vehemently.

The reader will perceive that in answering the second question I have anticipated the answer to the first one. The Lord warned Peter four times, each Gospel recording a separate instance, and there would be [at least] six denials, three before the first crowing of a rooster (John, Luke, Matthew) and another three before the second (Mark). It remains to enquire whether the several accounts of Peter’s denials will countenance this proposal. The relevant passages are Matthew 26:57-75, Mark 14:53-72, Luke 22:54-62 and John 18:15-27.

How Many Denials?

A cursory reading of these passages suggests that Peter’s denials were provoked by eight different challenges—the maid at the outside entrance (John), a maid in the courtyard (Matthew, Mark, Luke), the same maid a second time (Mark), a different maid in the gateway (Matthew), two different men (Luke, John), and the bystanders on two occasions (John and

Matthew, Mark). Although it may be possible to combine one pair or another, there is no reasonable way to get the number down to three. But what if there were at least six denials?

To really get the complete picture we need to plot the relevant information on a chart. We need to know who issued the challenge, where, when, just how was it done, what was Peter's reaction, and if a rooster crowed. Because of constraints of space and paper size, I will do a Gospel at a time, beginning with John.¹

John 18:15-27:

	1 st denial	2 nd denial	3 rd denial
Who?	the gatekeeper (f)	servants and operatives	a relative of Malchus
Where?	outside gate	by the fire	by the fire (?)
When?	at the beginning of the proceedings	a little while after the first one	a little while after the second one (?)
How was it done?	she asks: "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?"	they ask: "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"	he asks: "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?"
What was the reaction?	he says: "I am not!"	he said: "I am not!"	(Peter denied again)
Rooster?	(no)	(no)	immediately a rooster crowed

Luke 22:54-62:

	1 st denial	2 nd denial	3 rd denial
Who?	a servant girl	a man	another man
Where?	by the fire	by the fire (?)	by the fire (?)
When?	fairly early on (?)	a little later	about an hour later
How was it done?	she looked intently and said: "This man was also with him."	he said: "You also are of them."	he confidently affirmed: "Surely this fellow also was with him, for he is a Galilean."
What was the reaction?	he said: "Woman, I do not know him!"	he said: "Man, I am not!"	he said: "Man, I do not know what you are saying!"
Rooster?	(no)	(no)	immediately, while he was yet speaking, a rooster crowed.

Matthew 26:57-75:

	1 st denial	2 nd denial	3 rd denial
Who?	a servant girl	another girl	bystanders
Where?	by the fire	in the gateway	by the fire (?)
When?	fairly early on (?)	a little later	a little later

¹ A comparison of the contents of the four Gospels reveals that in the main John supplies information not recorded in the other three; he wrote last, with the purpose of supplementing their accounts. Here again, the three denials he describes are all new information, not to be found in the other three.

How was it done?	approached him saying: "You too were with Jesus the Galilean."	says to the others: "This fellow also was with Jesus the Natsorean."	come up to Peter and say: "Really, you too are one of them, because your very accent gives you away!"
What was the reaction?	denied before them all: "I don't know what you are saying."	denied with an oath: "I do not know the man!"	began to curse and to swear: "I do not know the man!"
Rooster?	(no)	(no)	immediately a roster crowed

Mark 14:53-72:

	1 st denial	2 nd denial	3 rd denial
Who?	a servant girl	the same girl	bystanders
Where?	by the fire	in the fore-court (?)	by the fire (?)
When?	fairly early on (?)	a little later	a little later
How was it done?	looked at him and said: "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene."	says to the bystanders: "This is one of them."	say to Peter again: "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean and your speech shows it!"
What was the reaction?	denied, saying: "I neither know nor understand what you are saying!"	(he denied again)	he began to curse and to swear: "I do not know this man of whom you speak!"
Rooster?	he went out to the fore-court and a rooster crowed	(no)	a rooster crowed a second time.

If you compare all the parameters—who, where, when, how, what—there really is no way to come out with only three denials; even to come out with only six requires some gymnastics (something I attempted to do in an early draft). Let us try to arrange the events in chronological sequence and see what happens.

John 18:17 gives us what is clearly the first challenge—as the maid who kept the outside door let Peter in, at John's request, she asked, "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?"¹ Even though John was evidently standing right there, Peter denied, "I am not". He then went in to stand near the fire in the courtyard. The other Gospels have Peter sitting, while John has him standing. Evidently there were quite a few people about—they could not all sit close to the fire. Presumably they would take turns standing near the fire to warm up and then move away a bit to sit down. Thus they, including Peter, would be alternately sitting and standing.

All four Gospels have Peter in the courtyard near the fire (Mat. 26:58 and 69, Mark 14:54 and 66, Luke 22:55, and John 18:18 and 25) and three of them (Matthew, Mark, John) give some

¹ Everyone there, including the girl, knows that John belongs to Jesus, so her question is perfectly natural, without malice—since John is vouching for Peter, she assumes that Peter must also belong to Jesus. John had heard all the warnings, so when Peter denied at the gate, in his presence, John doubtless kept a close eye on him the whole rest of the night. So we have an eyewitness account. Of course Peter himself would also be an eyewitness, but since he was undergoing satanic interference in his mind, his powers of recollection might be impaired.

account of the council's dealings with Jesus before going on with Peter's denials.¹ We know from Luke 22:61 that Jesus was at a window that looked out on the courtyard, only with His back to it. John is the only one who records that the high priest asked Jesus about His disciples (v. 19)—he is facing Jesus and therefore the open window, and would be speaking loudly enough for everyone in the room to hear clearly, so the people in the courtyard also heard everything he said—then in verse 25 we read, “Therefore they said to him, ‘You aren’t one of his disciples too, are you?’” I suggest that verse 25 gives us the second challenge and denial. The guards around the fire, presumably prompted by the high priest’s questioning Jesus about His disciples, put their question to Peter. He answers them as he did the girl at the gate, “I am not”. So far the challengers have only questioned, rather than affirm, but now the tempo quickens.

I take it that the first denials recorded in Matthew (26:69-70), Mark (14:66-68) and Luke (22:56-57) form a single episode. Collating them we may understand the following. A certain serving girl of the high priest came by and saw Peter sitting near the fire. She looked closely at him and said to the others, “This man also was with him” (Luke). She then addressed Peter directly, “You also were with Jesus the Nazarene, of Galilee” (Matthew, Mark). But he denied before them all, saying, “Girl, I don’t know him; I neither know nor understand what you’re talking about!” He then went out to the forecourt, and a rooster crowed (Mark 14:68). Thus, there were [at least] three denials before the first cockcrow.

I say ‘at least’ because the third denial in John probably belongs here as well. In 18:26 the verb “to say” is in the present tense, which seems to suggest a brief interval rather than nearly an hour (Luke 22:59); also the challenge is still framed as a question, “Didn’t I see you with him in the garden?”, rather than a direct accusation, which would fit better toward the beginning than at the end. I see no problem with suggesting that all three of the denials in John were part of the first set and thus he records the first rooster crow. In that event I would understand that there were actually four denials before the first crowing, the three in John plus the first one in the others. Because the rooster crowed “immediately” I imagine that the order would be as follows: the first two in John, in that order, then the first one in the others, and then, as Peter was moving toward the fore-court, the relative of Peter’s victim comes alongside and puts his question, so that Peter is at the fore-court when the first rooster crows (Mark 14:68). Actually, I am inclined to suspect that indeed there were four denials before the first cockcrow, which is recorded by both Mark and John (recall that Jesus neither said nor implied that there would be ‘only’ three).²

Now for the next round. In Mark (14:69) the same girl sees Peter again and starts telling the bystanders, “This fellow is one of them”. In Matthew (26:71) a different girl sees him and tells the bystanders, “This fellow was with Jesus the Natsorean”. In Luke (22:58) a man saw him and said, “You also are one of them”. In order to come out with only three denials in the second set, two of these would have to be combined, but as already stated, I am not aware of anything in the Text that rules out the possibility that there could be more than three. It seems to me that there is a progression in Peter’s desperation, which culminates in his cursing and swearing. On that basis I would consider the instances in Mark and Luke as forming a single episode (if I had to)—the girl speaks, Peter denies, a man backs the girl up and Peter answers, “Man, I am not!” Then the instance in Matthew would be the sixth

¹ It is after midnight and chilly in the courtyard, hence the fire; but there must have been over fifty people in the room where the questioning was going on, and all windows would be open.

² The satanic interference in Peter’s mind was so effective that not even the rooster’s crowing woke him up.

denial—notice that now Peter adds an oath! Because of the oath I consider that this denial comes after the other two just mentioned; also, Peter has moved out to the gateway. Actually, I am inclined to suspect that there were also four denials before the second cockcrow, so I will start again on that basis.

The girl that provoked the third denial is not about to let Peter get away with that denial. Whether she followed him out to the forecourt, or he moved back toward the fire, I imagine that Mark 14:69 records the fifth denial. If so, Luke 22:58 records the sixth denial, perhaps near the fire. Peter is definitely uncomfortable; he is getting altogether too much unwelcome attention. He moves out to the gateway (perhaps thinking of abandoning the premises)¹ where he is challenged by a different girl (Matthew 26:71); Peter denies with an oath (number seven). Luke (22:59) puts ‘about an hour’ between denials six and eight, so perhaps Peter was left alone for a bit. However, the ‘trial’ is over but the bosses are waiting for dawn so they can take Jesus to Pilate. Since the bosses are not going home, the guards and employees cannot either—they are obliged to wait out in the cold, bored stiff—so Peter is now the only show in town.

For the eighth denial three Gospels offer a candidate (Mat. 26:73-74, Mark 14:70-72, Luke 22:59-60). The accounts in Matthew and Mark are very similar and evidently parallel. Since Matthew has the rooster crowing “immediately” and Mark “the second time” this has to be last denial—since by now Peter is cursing and swearing it is fitting that it should be. By that time most of the people on the premises would be aware of Peter and his denials. After listening for a while they closed in, citing his accent. The account in Luke has just one man speaking, but his words are in the same vein. This also has to be the last denial because we are told that the rooster crowed while Peter was still speaking. Evidently a number of people were speaking at once (but not in unison), or in rapid succession, and different writers preserve some of the variety of statement. It would appear that they were ganging up on Peter, because he is driven to curse and to swear. And so we have a second set of four denials, before the second cockcrow. Even then it took a direct look from the Lord (Luke 22:61) to break Satan’s spell and bring Peter to a realization of what he had done.

But the question may well be asked, why did each Gospel writer report and speak of only three denials (albeit giving different selections) if there were really six or eight?² I suggest that we are looking at a prime example of the grace and sensitivity of God. It would be quite

¹ So why didn’t Peter just bolt out the gate at that point? I would say that there was supernatural intervention—he simply was not allowed to leave.

² Some 50% of the Greek manuscripts that contain the Gospels have colophons; these colophons state that Matthew was ‘published’ 8 years after Christ’s ascension, Mark 10 years after, Luke 15 years after and John 32 years after Christ’s ascension. (So the four Gospels are arranged in chronological order, not only in our Bibles but in the vast majority of the Greek manuscripts.) “To the Jew first, . . .”—since Matthew wrote for a Jewish audience, God’s priorities dictated that Matthew’s should be the first inspired account of our Savior’s life on earth to circulate. Then Mark, with Matthew’s Gospel open in front of him, and Peter at his elbow, wrote for the Roman mind (since Romans would care nothing for Hebrew Scriptures, Mark removed virtually all reference to fulfilled prophecy). Then Luke, with both Mark and Matthew to hand, wrote the third, for the Greek mind. Then John, with the first three open, wrote to fill in the gaps, preserving important information not provided by the others, for all minds. Now let’s consider Peter’s denials within that framework. Matthew wrote first, with one cockcrow. Mark says there were really two cockcrows and changes the second denial (1 and 3 are the same in Mark and Matthew). Luke speaks of just one cockcrow, changes the second denial yet again and provides added information (specific) about the third. So just with these three accounts we are up to five denials. John speaks of just one cockcrow but records three new denials, not mentioned by the other three. If these are inspired accounts, then God did it on purpose, and it is up to us to try to figure out why (see my concluding paragraph).

humiliating enough to have denied the Lord three/four times, but to go on to do so another three/four times, even after hearing a rooster crow, would be almost too much to bear. Rather than put the full extent of Peter's ignominy on display the Holy Spirit had each writer give only a partial account, enough for the purposes of the record but without flaying Peter unnecessarily. I find it interesting to note that it is Mark who furnishes the necessary clue that there was to be a second set of denials. The opinion is widely held that Peter influenced the composition of this Gospel—this is overtly stated in the introduction to the Gospel found in many manuscripts—and if so he may have insisted on including the hint as to the extent of his humiliation, whereas the others delicately avoided it.

The Text-critical Problem

Although there are around a hundred textual differences reflected in the printed editions of the Greek Text (in the passages considered), I will confine my remarks here to the set that is especially bothersome in terms of the subject matter of this paper.

There are four places in Mark's account that relate to the two cockcrows: "twice" in 14:30, "and a rooster crowed" in 14:68, "the second time" and "twice" in 14:72. Instances 1, 3 and 4 go together and appear to contradict the account in Matthew, Luke and John. Instance 2 is apparently even worse because according to Mark's account Peter had only denied once when the rooster 'jumped the gun' and crowed before he was supposed to (Jesus had said there would certainly be three denials, as recorded in the other three Gospels). Accordingly, ever since the second century there have been those who tried to 'help' Mark out of his difficulties, tampering with the text.

According to the present state of our knowledge it appears that seven Greek MSS omit "twice" in 14:30 (but they do so in two different ways), nine MSS omit "and a rooster crowed" in 14:68 (but in two ways), five omit "the second time" in 14:72^a, and seven omit "twice" in 14:72^b (two others omit the whole clause). The roster of MSS shifts in each case, as does the versional evidence that sides with the omissions. Only three witnesses are thoroughgoing and omit all four: Codex Aleph, cursive 579 and the Old Latin "c" (it^c). This is a curious state of affairs. If the purpose of the omissions was to make Mark conform to the other Gospels, only Aleph, 579 and it^c have succeeded. Of the seventeen MSS involved, twelve omit only one of the four; one MS omits two of them; and two MSS omit three (there is some doubt here). Unless someone is prepared to show why Aleph and 579 are to be preferred above every other MS (some 1700 for Mark), and it^c above all the rest of the versional evidence, Latin and otherwise, there is really no reason to take the omissions seriously. However, the eclectic school does take them seriously, even without the requisite demonstration.

It appears that the 'harder reading' canon has come to the aid of the vast majority of the MSS, at least as far as the editors of the 'critical' or eclectic texts presently in vogue are concerned. Instances 1, 3, and 4 are retained in all Nestle and UBS editions (although UBS ascribes "a considerable degree of doubt" to 1 and 3, and "some degree of doubt" to 4—the change in grade here is strange). However, when it comes to instance 2 ("and a rooster crowed") we get some variety: Nestle editions 1 to 25 omit the words; Nestle²⁶ and all three UBS editions retain them, but in single brackets (the UBS editors ascribe "a very high degree of doubt" to these words, along with the brackets which themselves signify "dubious textual validity"). Presumably the crucial datum here is that Codex B joins the evidence for omission with instance 2 (but not the others). From W-H through N²⁵ that was enough to banish the words from the Text. One supposes that it was the "harder reading" canon that restored

them to UBS and N²⁶, if only in brackets. It seems to me that this case affords a clear example of the superficiality that characterizes the work of the eclectic school—to challenge the authenticity of a reading supported by over 99% of the MSS is unreasonable at any time, but to do so in the face of a perfectly obvious motivation for the omission is irresponsible.

The English versions that I have consulted all retain instances 1, 3 and 4, but deal variously with instance 2. AV, LB, NKJV, Phillips and TEV all retain “and a rooster crowed”, but LB favors us with a footnote: “This statement is found in only some of the MSS”. What might the purpose of such a footnote be? From the use of the word “only” it would appear that the purpose is to raise a doubt in the reader’s mind about the reliability of the Text. Why would they want to do that? The use of the word “some” also invites comment: it is their way of referring to some 1700 MSS, against nine! Will the reader not be deceived?

Jerusalem, NASB, NEB, NIV and RSV all omit the clause, but only Jerusalem does so without comment. The footnote in NEB reads, “Some witnesses insert ‘and a cock crew’.” As in LB, by “some” they mean some 1700 MSS, not to mention massive versional support and almost unanimous lectionary support. Will the reader not be deceived? The footnote in RSV reads, “Other ancient authorities add ‘and the cock crowed’.” The footnote in NIV reads, “Some early MSS add ‘and the rooster crowd’.” The footnote in NASB reads, “Later mss. add: ‘and a cock crowed’.” In order to evaluate such footnotes we would need to know the precise definitions for “ancient”, “early” and “later”. However, I submit that the uninitiated reader of such footnotes will certainly be misled as to the massive evidence against omission.

The case of the NIV invites special comment. It is the only version that offers a footnote at all four instances. At 14:30 we read, “Some early MSS omit ‘twice’.” At 14:68 we read, “Some early MSS add ‘and the rooster crowed’.” At 14:72^a we read, “Some early MSS omit ‘the second time’.” At 14:72^b we read, “Some early MSS omit ‘twice’.” (The meaning of “some” in the second instance is quite different from that in the other three.) What possible reason could the editors have had for including these footnotes? The immediate effect is to call in question the reliability of the Text at those points. Since the NIV editors held to a high view of Scripture, why would they want to do that? I suppose that it was precisely their concern for the inerrancy of the Text that was at work here. It appears that they did not see any other solution to the seeming discrepancy between Mark and the other Gospels than to imply that Aleph and Old Latin “c” might be right after all. Alas!

The NIV editors are barking up the wrong tree. The worst thing to be done here would be to follow Aleph in deleting all four instances. As already pointed out, the four Gospels record eight different challenges resulting in denials, but no two Gospels have the same selection. So to follow Aleph would force us to try to accommodate eight denials before the first rooster crow, which seems to me to be hopeless. The best thing to be done here is to follow the true Text, which God has graciously caused to be preserved, in this case, in over 99% of the evidence. Peter denied three/four times before the first rooster crow and another set of three/four before the second. The Lord had warned him: “Simon, Simon, indeed Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). Peter should have paid attention.

Implications

One question that arises is this: What about the internal integrity of each account? For instance, in John’s account, even if we were to claim that two of the denials occurred before the first rooster crow, while the third denial came after the first and before the second, would this claim do violence to the integrity of John’s Gospel? Why would it? Let us review

the record. In John 13:38 Jesus said to Peter, “Most assuredly I say to you, a rooster shall not crow till you have denied me three times!” The Lord did not say “only” three times—the emphasis is on the obligatory absence of any rooster crow until Peter has denied three times, at least three times (there is nothing in the Lord’s turn of phrase to preclude the possibility that there could be more than three). In the Greek text there is no definite article with “rooster” and there is an emphatic double negative with the verb “to crow”—“a rooster shall not crow!” (These observations also apply in Luke 22:34; in fact, in all four Gospels, in both the predictions and the fulfillments, it is always “a” rooster.)

Turning to John’s account of the denials themselves, the first one, at the outside door (18:17), poses no difficulty. The second denial (18:25) likewise poses no difficulty—these two occurred before any rooster crow. But what if the third denial (in John’s account, 18:26-27) came after the first crowing?¹ I see no problem, in principle. The Lord made a statement of fact, correctly recorded by John—there had to be three denials before the first rooster crow. This was precisely fulfilled, the others supplying the third denial. Nothing in John’s account precludes the possibility that there should be subsequent crowings. (Anyone who has lived near roosters knows that they start crowing off and on anytime after midnight and at daybreak put on a concert—it seems obvious to me that the first two crowings were overtly controlled by God so as to match Christ’s predictions.) In 18:27, after the third denial recorded by John, we read, “and immediately a rooster crowed”. John does not say that it was the first crowing. Someone without access to the other Gospels would naturally assume that John records the first rooster crow, and that the three denials he gives are the whole story—but nothing in John’s statement demands that interpretation; it simply arises from incomplete information. The other three present several added denials that are clearly distinct. The several Evangelists provide distinct sets of details, much like the pieces of a puzzle, that must be fitted together to get the whole picture. The several accounts are complementary, not contradictory.

But how about the internal integrity of Mark’s account? He is the only one who mentions the second rooster crow, as such, and in fact his account is tied to it. Jesus said, “before a rooster crows twice you will deny me three times,” and Mark records three denials before the second rooster crow. Again, Jesus did not say “only” three times, the emphasis is on “you” and “twice”. The other Gospels are needed to get the full picture, but Mark’s account is entirely self consistent.

And how about Luke? In the warning the emphasis is on the obligatory absence of a rooster crow until Peter has denied three times—at least three times (Jesus did not say “only” three times). After describing three of the denials Luke writes, “and immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed”. “A” rooster—he does not say it was the first. Then Luke has Peter remembering that Jesus said, “Before a rooster crows you will deny me three times”. Presumably Peter remembered every detail of all the warnings, but Luke (and each of the other Evangelists) gives only a partial description—in fact, Luke has him recalling the warning recorded by Matthew, not the one he himself gave. A reader having only Luke’s account may assume that he told the whole story, but it is an unwarranted assumption. Luke’s account is internally consistent yet the precise turn of phrase is such that it does not preclude my proposal.

¹ As the reader knows, I believe the third denial in John comes before the first cock crow, but I am covering this possibility for the sake of those who may prefer to have it in the second set.

So what about Matthew? Virtually everything said about Luke above can be repeated here. He has Peter remembering the warning he himself recorded. Again it is “a” rooster. Matthew’s account is internally consistent yet the turn of phrase will accommodate my proposal without being violated. All of which brings us back to the question: Why does each Gospel speak of three denials, rather than six, eight or whatever? I don’t know; we aren’t told. My best guess is that God chose to draw a veil over the full extent of Peter’s ignominy (and perhaps to test our disposition when faced with the unexplained). But it remains a plain fact that each Gospel offers a different assortment of challenges and denials, giving a total of at least eight denials.

Another question that I have heard concerns the validity of attempting an exercise such as this at all. I believe that God deliberately brings difficulties into our lives (Job in the ash heap, Abraham on Moriah, Moses herding sheep, Joseph in prison, Daniel with the lions, and on, and on), and puts puzzles in the world, to test our disposition and fiber, and to cause us to grow. “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2). [Even if you are not a king, you get the point.] The case of John the baptizer in prison comes closer to home. He is frustrated, maybe disillusioned; he did his job but his expectations are not being realized. So he sends two disciples to ask Jesus for an explanation. In effect Jesus answers, “Check the evidence; do your homework”, and closes with, “And blessed is he who is not offended because of me” (Matthew 11:6). When faced with the difficult or unexplained we must be careful not to rebel. It is much better to obey the command recorded in 1 Peter 3:15. “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, . . .” Since opponents of a Text with objective authority have used the accounts of Peter’s denials as an argument against any idea of inerrancy, I consider that a defense of that inerrancy is in order.

2) Harmonizing the accounts of the Resurrection

A rough sequence within the parallel accounts

Matthew 27:62-28:1;
Mark 16:1-3 // Luke 24:1;
Matthew 28:2-4;
John 20:1-10;
Matthew 28:5-8 // Mark 16:4-8 // Luke 24:2-8;
Mark 16:9 // John 20:11-18;
Matthew 28:9-15;
Luke 24:13-35;
Luke 24:36-43 // John 20:19-31.

The presumed sequence of events

0. [Saturday—guards seal the stone and set up a watch (Matthew 27:62-66).]
1. Jesus rises from the dead.¹

¹ None of the Evangelists mentions the moment of the resurrection; probably because that information was never revealed. The fact is taken for granted (the “firstborn from the dead”—Col. 1:18, Rev. 1:5; the “firstfruits”—1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

2. Early Sunday morning the women set out for the tomb—Magdalene (John 20:1); Magdalene and Mary (Matthew 28:1); Magdalene, Mary and Salome (Mark 16:1-2); Magdalene, Mary, Joanna and others (Luke 23:55-24:1, 10).¹
3. On the way they worry about the stone (Mark 16:3).
4. Before they arrive an angel rolls back the stone, complete with earthquake, etc. (Matthew 28:2-4).²
5. They arrive and see that the stone has been rolled back, but the angel was no longer visible outside (Mark 16:4, Luke 24:2, John 20:1).³
6. Magdalene takes off immediately to tell Peter—Peter and John run to the tomb to see (John 20:2-3).⁴
7. Before Peter and John get there the other women enter the tomb, and see and hear the angels (Luke 24:3-8, Mark 16:5-7, Matthew 28:5-7).⁵
8. They leave the tomb in fear, saying nothing to the guards or anyone they chance to meet (Mark 16:8, Matthew 28:8a).
9. Probably right after the women leave, and before Peter and John arrive, the guards take off (Matthew 28:11-15).
10. Peter and John come and go [to their own homes] (John 20:4-10; cf. Luke 24:12 that is an historical aside).⁶ No mention is made of either angels or guards, so presumably Peter and John saw no one—the place appeared to be abandoned.

¹ The several accounts say it was very early, as the day began to dawn, while it was still dark, but by the time they got to the tomb the sun had risen. There is no discrepancy: recall that the garden is on the west side of a mountain, so even after the sun had risen the tomb would be in shadow, besides the shade of the trees. It was still darkish when they started out, but away from the mountain it was already day by the time they arrived—the tomb area would still be gloomy.

² The removal of the stone was not to let Jesus out; it was to let witnesses in! If we only had Matthew's record, we could assume that the women saw the shining angel outside the sepulcher, but a comparison of the other accounts leads to a different understanding. So how do we know those details? Matthew 28:11 says that "some" of the guard reported to the priests and accepted big money to spread a false report, but what happened to the other guards? I have no doubt that some of those guards were soundly converted and gave an eyewitness account to the Christian community.

³ If the angel had been visible, Magdalene would not have taken off, because she would not have thought that the body had been stolen. The hypothesis that she came once alone, before the others, is highly improbable (see the next note).

⁴ Her use of the plural "we", verse 2, indicates that she was not alone at the tomb.

⁵ I take Matthew and Mark to be parallel, describing the same event: the angel who rolled away the stone is now inside the sepulcher, sitting on the right side; he has turned off his neon and appears to be a young man clothed in white; each account furnishes a few distinct details in the angel's speech—Mark includes "and Peter" [was Peter looking over his shoulder?]. The women were not sure they were happy with the situation, and the 'young man' may well have said more than Matthew and Mark record. I take it that Luke records a second inning: the women are having trouble assimilating the missing body (they were loaded with spices to put on that body—was their effort to be wasted?); so the angel calls in a colleague and they both turn on their neon—a little shock treatment; then they appeal to Jesus' own words, which the women remember, and with that they are convinced and go their way.

⁶ Verse 8 says that John (the author) "saw and believed". What did John 'see' that made him 'believe'? He saw the linen strips 'lying', that is, in the form of the body, only there was no body inside them! If someone had

11. Magdalene returns to the sepulcher but does not get there until everyone is gone (that is why she thought Jesus was the gardener); Jesus appears to her first (Mark 16:9, John 20:11-17).¹
12. Then Jesus appears to the other women and they go on their way to tell the disciples (Matthew 28:9-10, Luke 24:9-11).²
13. Magdalene goes and tells the disciples (Mark 16:10-11, John 20:18).
14. Later in the day Jesus appears to Peter (cf. Luke 24:34).³
15. The Emmaus road episode (Luke 24:13-35, Mark 16:12-13).⁴

stolen the body, as Magdalene supposed, they would have taken the wrapped package (much easier to carry) and there would have been no linen strips. If someone had unwrapped the body, for whatever reason, there would have been a sizable mound of linen strips and spices piled up (how much cloth would it take to wrap up a hundred pounds of spices?). No, Jesus simply passed through the cloth, as He would later pass through the wall of the upper room, leaving the package like a mummy case or empty cocoon. When John saw that he understood that the only possible explanation was resurrection.

- ¹ When the disciples took off running, of course Magdalene followed them back to the tomb. But she was winded, and could not keep up with them (actually, in that culture women probably seldom ran, so she would really be out of breath, but she was not about to be left out of the action, either). She may have arrived as they were leaving; if not they would pass her on the road. In verse 12 John says that she saw two ‘angels’. How did John know they were angels? He had just been there and knew there were no human beings around (the guards were presumably gone before the two got there). The angels were in white, but probably not shining, or Magdalene would have been shaken out of her despair. She was so locked in to her sorrow that not even seeing the wrappings collapsed without the body sank in.
- ² The question may reasonably be asked: How could Magdalene have time to go and come and Jesus appear to her first and still have time to appear to the women before they got to the disciples, the more so since Matthew 28:8 says the women “hurried and ran”? I offer the following considerations in relief of the perceived difficulty: 1) The Jerusalem of that day was small and distances were short (“nearby”, John 19:42)—it was probably less than a mile, or even half a mile, between the tomb and Peter’s house, as well as where the other disciples were staying; 2) the women were probably slow in entering the tomb—the guards making like dead men, dark, spooky (it’s a cemetery), all very strange, Magdalene the impulsive one wasn’t there; they would be leery—Magdalene may have been almost to Peter’s house before they worked up the courage to enter the tomb; 3) Magdalene, Peter and John were excited and had extra adrenalin—it didn’t take that long; 4) the women ran out of the tomb and the garden, but not necessarily all the way to the disciples—once they got away from the garden and on ‘safe’ ground they may well have slowed down, or even stopped, to get a grip on themselves and discuss what had happened (Mary, the mother of James, was no longer young, and none of the women was used to running, not to mention the type of clothing they wore). Putting it all together, I see no reason to doubt that it all happened just like the Text says.
- ³ I see no way of determining the correct sequence of items 14 and 15, it could have been the other way around. Also, during resurrection Sunday (we don’t know just when) many resurrected saints “went into the holy city and appeared to many” (Matthew 27:53), which would have been **dramatic** confirmatory evidence to those who were visited.
- ⁴ Some have alleged a discrepancy between the two accounts—their mistake is to tie both accounts to the eleven, which was not the case. There were other people in the upper room, besides the eleven. The eleven were reclining at a table, the ‘others’ would be nearer the door. The two from Emmaus come bursting in, all excited and probably feeling just a little important; it is the ‘others’, probably to ‘prick their balloon’, who say, “Oh, we already know that; He has appeared to Simon”. (Human nature hasn’t changed, and they didn’t have the Holy Spirit yet.) While the two from Emmaus are talking with the ‘others’, not the eleven, Jesus Himself appears and interacts with the eleven (and they think He is a ghost!). Mark, writing for a Roman audience, is emphasizing that the disciples were not gullible, did not ‘believe’ because they wanted to—in verse 11 they didn’t believe Magdalene, in verse 13 nor the two, in verse 14 Jesus rebukes their unbelief. There is nothing here to impugn the genuineness of these verses—they were certainly written by Mark at the same time that he wrote the rest. According to Matthew 28:17 many days later some were still doubting. In any group of

16. Jesus appears to the eleven, Thomas being absent (Luke 24:36-48, Mark 16:14-18, John 20:19-23).

17. After Jesus leaves, Thomas comes in and they tell him (John 20:24-25).

Post resurrection day events

1. The next Sunday Jesus appears to them again and deals with Thomas (John 20:26-29).

2. Jesus appears to the seven beside the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-22).

3. On a mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20).

4. Jesus appears to over 500, also to James (1 Corinthians 15:6-7).¹

5. The ascension from Olivet (Mark 16:19-20, Luke 24:49-51, Acts 1:3-12).

Conclusion

In sum, I see no reason for doubt: it all happened just as the Text describes it. There are no discrepancies, in spite of the variety of details supplied by various eyewitnesses (including converted guards) and written down by four different Evangelists. It is just what we should expect from an inspired Text—inspired and preserved, to this day.

3) Some related anomalies in Matthew's genealogy of the Christ

Matthew's purpose is to demonstrate that Jesus, the Messiah, has a legal right to sit on David's throne (perhaps answering the Lord's own question in Matthew 22:42). Although there are many kings in the genealogy, David is the only one who is described as 'the king', twice. Since David's throne has to do with the covenant people, and that covenant began with Abraham, the genealogy does as well. It ends with Joseph, Jesus' 'father' by adoption, since Jesus had none of Joseph's genes.² It was sufficient to Matthew's purpose to show that Joseph was a linear, and legal, descendant of David, the number of intervening generations was beside the point. Matthew's Gospel was directed primarily to a Jewish audience, to whom legal rights were important.

Matthew divides his genealogy of the Christ into three groups of fourteen 'generations'. A comparison of his genealogy with the OT record indicates that it is not a 'normal', straightforward genealogy—there are some anomalies.³ In an effort to understand the purpose behind the anomalies, I will begin with the second group, which may be said to be made up of sovereign kings of Judah. Going back to the OT we discover that there were seventeen such kings, not fourteen. But, Matthew says 'generations', not reigns, and since Ahaziah reigned only one year, Amon only two, and Abijah only three, they can be

people there are always differing levels of belief and unbelief. People's heads work differently, and at different speeds.

¹ I see no way of determining the correct sequence of the events in items 3 and 4.

² Indeed He could not, because of the prophecies in Jeremiah 22:30 and 36:30, wherein Jeconiah and Jehoiakim are cursed. However, Jesus received some of David's genes through Mary (please see the note that accompanies Luke 3:23 in my translation).

³ I believe that Matthew composed his Gospel under divine guidance, which leads me to the conclusion that the anomalies were deliberate, on God's part. Therefore, my attempt to unravel the anomalies tries to understand the Holy Spirit's purpose in introducing them into the record.

assimilated into the fourteen generations. That said, however, we next observe that Abijah and Amon are duly included in the list, while Ahaziah is not, followed by Joash and Amaziah. The three excluded names form a group between Jehoram and Uzziah.

Verse eight says that "Joram begot Uzziah", the verb 'begot' being the same one used throughout, but in fact Uzziah was Joram's (Jehoram's) great-great-grandson. So we see that 'begot' refers to a linear descendant, not necessarily a son. We also see that the number 'fourteen' is not being used in a strictly literal sense (whatever the author's purpose may have been). It also appears that 'generation' is not being used in a strictly literal sense. It follows that we are looking at an edited genealogy, edited in accord with the author's purpose.

In an effort to understand why the group of three was excluded, I ask: What might they have in common? They had in common genes from Ahab and Jezebel, as also a direct spiritual and moral influence from them. Ahaziah's mother was Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, so 50% of his genes were from Ahab. 2 Kings 8:27 says that Ahaziah was a son-in-law of the house of Ahab, referring to the mother of Joash, so 75% of his genes were from Ahab. Since Joash married Jehoaddan of Jerusalem, the contamination in Amaziah was down to 37%, and then in Uzziah it was below 20%.¹ This is my best guess as to why that group was excluded; a rebuke after the fact. (Matthew is giving an edited genealogy of the Christ, and Ahab's genes were definitely undesirable.)

We come now to another anomaly: $14 \times 3 = 42$, but only 41 names are given; what to do? We begin by noticing that both David and Jeconiah are mentioned on both sides of a 'boundary'. I will consider the second boundary first. Verse eleven says that "Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers", passing over Jehoiakim, Jeconiah's father. But according to the Record, it was Jehoiakim who had "brothers", not Jeconiah. Since we need the real Jeconiah in the third group to make fourteen names, I place Jeconiah in the third group—counting both Jeconiah and Christ we get fourteen names.² But why was Jehoiakim omitted? So far as I know, he was the only king who had the perversity to actually cut up a scroll with God's Word and then throw it in the fire, Jeremiah 36:23, and the curse that follows in verse 30 is stated to be a consequence of that act. If we count David in the second group, Jehoiakim would make fifteen. But without Jehoiakim we need David in the second group to make fourteen. But that raises another difficulty: we also need David in the first group, to make fourteen. Because of the "brothers", I consider that the 'Jeconiah' before the captivity actually stands for Jehoiakim, whose name is omitted because of his heinous crime in destroying the scroll. In that event, we have fourteen without David, so he can be assigned to the first group.

If the second group is made up of kings, the first group is made up of patriarchs. Acts 2:29 calls David a 'patriarch', so we may not disqualify him on that basis, but of course he is better known as a king—indeed he is expressly called that in the genealogy (the only one who is). Although David may be both patriarch and king, he may not be two people, nor two generations. In consequence, I am decidedly uncomfortable with the proposal that David

¹ It was Dr. Floyd N. Jones who started me thinking along this line (*Chronology of the Old Testament: A Return to the Basics*, Kings Word Press, 1999, pp. 38-42).

² Of course, if four people were omitted from the second group, some may also have been omitted from the third, but we have no way of knowing, and it would make no difference to the purpose of this genealogy.

must be placed in both groups—we should neither split him in two, nor double him. To my mind, he fits better in the second group, but that would leave only thirteen for the first one. Enter Rahab and Ruth (and if four people were omitted from the second group, why could not some also be omitted from the first?). However, I tentatively assign David to the first group, making fourteen. Since David is used as the first boundary, and the purpose of the genealogy is to establish Jesus' right to David's throne, his name is repeated, but I do not count him in the second group.

There were 340 years between the death of Joshua and the birth of David, and Salmon married Rahab while Joshua was still alive, presumably. That sort of obliges Boaz, Obed and Jesse to do their begetting at age 100, or thereabouts (perhaps not impossible, but certainly improbable). But what if 'begot' is being used for a grandson, as we have already seen? (Josiah begot Jeconiah, with no mention of Jehoiakim.) If Athaliah's genes were enough to disqualify Ahaziah, what about Rahab's genes? She was not even an Israelite, and worse, she was a prostitute. Now the Law says some rather severe things about prostitutes.¹ "You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog [catamite] to the house of the LORD your God, . . . for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 23:18). For a priest to marry a harlot would profane his posterity (Leviticus 21:13-15), so how about an ancestor of the Messiah? Of course it is possible for a prostitute to be saved, but why was she even mentioned? And why were Tamar, Ruth, and Uriah's wife mentioned? Women were not normally included in genealogies.²

Now consider Ruth. She was a Moabitess, and according to Deuteronomy 23:3 a Moabite could not enter the assembly of the LORD to the tenth generation. [To me it is an astonishing example of the grace of God that she was included in the Messiah's line.] She embraced Naomi's God, but what about her genes? 'Ten generations' has to do with genes, not spiritual conversion. Moab was a son of Lot, and the first 'Moabite' would be his son, probably a contemporary of Jacob. From Jacob to Salmon we have seven generations, certainly fewer than ten, so Ruth could not enter. Could it be possible that Rahab and Ruth each represent a missing generation? Could that be why they are mentioned?³ If we divide 300 years by five, then the average begetting age would be 60, certainly within the bounds of reason (and if more than two generations were skipped, the number would be further reduced). I repeat that this is not a 'normal' genealogy. Why did Matthew want three 'equal' groups, and why did he choose 'fourteen'? Perhaps for stylistic (symmetry, balance) and mnemonic reasons. However, my concern has been to address any perceived errors of fact, which an inspired Text should not have.

To conclude: Matthew gives us an edited genealogy of the Messiah. If on the one hand it emphasizes the Messiah's grace, on the other it reflects the Messiah's holiness—He cannot overlook sin and its consequences (the four excluded names in the second group are due to

¹ However, "the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). This being an edited genealogy of the Messiah, perhaps Rahab, and the other women, were included to emphasize the grace of the Messiah.

² None of the decent, honest, honorable, responsible mothers are mentioned, only 'exceptions'!

³ Tamar had suffered a severe injustice, and David's sin with Bathsheba was unusually perverse (cowardly murder), but Rahab was probably a victim of circumstances, and Ruth was certainly not to blame for having been born a Moabitess.

that holiness). If the four women were included as a reflection of the Messiah's grace, it is also true that the consequences of sin are not hidden—the fourth is called simply 'Uriah's wife' (not 'widow', even though Solomon was conceived after the murder of Uriah—David did not marry a widow, he stole someone else's wife).

23) Mary's genealogy—Luke 3:23

Και αυτος ην ο Ιησους, ωσει ετων τριακοντα αρχομενος, ων ως ενομιζετο υιος Ιωσηφ, του Ηλει, του Ματθαν, του Λευι, του Μελχι, . . .

There are four words here that invite special attention: *και*, *αυτος*, *ην* and *ως*. Since verse 22 ends with a statement from the Father at Jesus' baptism, it is clear that verse 23 begins another section. But the conjunction that signals the transition is *και* and not *δε*, as one would expect—this means that 'Jesus' continues as the topic. But in that event, how does one explain the personal pronoun *αυτος*, the more so in such an emphatic position? If the author's purpose was simply to register Jesus as a son of Joseph, as many suppose, why didn't he just write *και ο Ιησους ην υιος Ιωσηφ*, etc.?

But then, why write *ως ενομιζετο*? It seems to me that the normal meaning of "as was supposed" is to affirm that Jesus was in fact Joseph's son; but that is precisely what Jesus **was not**. Luke has already made clear that Jesus' real Father was the Holy Spirit—1:34-35, 43, 45; 2:49. So what Luke is really saying is that although the people supposed Jesus to be Joseph's son, He actually had a different lineage—we should translate "so it was supposed". (Recall that a faithful and loyal translation seeks to transmit correctly the meaning intended by the author.)

The verb *ην* is the only independent one in the whole paragraph, verses 23-38. Is it working with the participle *αρχομενος* in a periphrastic construction? That appears to be the tendency of the eclectic text that places the participle right after Jesus (following less than 2% of the Greek MSS), which makes Jesus out to be in fact Joseph's son. It seems to me to be far more natural to take the participial clauses as being circumstantial: "beginning at about thirty years of age" and "being (so it was supposed) a son of Joseph". Setting those two clauses aside, the independent clause that remains is *ην ο Ιησους του Ηλει*, "Jesus was of Eli".

The participle 'beginning' requires an object, that the Text leaves implicit; from the context it seems clear that we may supply 'His ministry', or some such thing, which is why most versions do so. I suggest the following rendering: "Beginning *His ministry* at about thirty years of age, being (so it was supposed) a son of Joseph, Jesus was actually of Eli, of Mathan, of Levi, . . ." I take it that the emphatic pronoun *αυτος* heightens the contrast between what the people imagined and the reality. Jesus was a grandson of Eli, Mary's father—Luke gives the genealogy of Jesus through His mother, while Matthew gives it through His stepfather. Jesus received some of David's genes through Mary and Nathan; the glorified body now at the Father's right hand, and that will one day occupy David's throne, has some of his genes.

The eclectic text gives our verse a different wording: *και αυτος ην Ιησους αρχομενος ωσει ετων τριακοντα, ων υιος, ως ενομιζετο, Ιωσηφ του Ηλι του Ματθατ του Λευι του Μελχι, . . .* The RSV translates it like this: "Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, . . ." Is not the normal meaning of this rendering that Jesus was in fact the son of Joseph? However, every version that I recall seeing has "Joseph, the son of Heli", which directly contradicts Matthew, "Jacob begot

Joseph". The word 'son' (without the article) occurs only with Joseph, although most versions supply it on down the genealogy. But Luke is precisely correct in not using it, because it would not hold for the first and last names in the list—Eli did not beget Jesus (nor Joseph) and God did not beget Adam.

So then, properly understood Luke does not contradict Matthew (with reference to Joseph's father), nor does he affirm an error of fact (with reference to Jesus' father).

5) The 'Legion' and the pigs; where was it?

We need to start with the evidence supplied by the Greek manuscripts. We encounter the episode in three of the Gospels.

Matthew 8:28: γεργεςηνων 98% (Gergesenes) AV, NKJV
γαδαρηνων 2% (Gadarenes) NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

NIV footnote: "Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; others *Gerasenes*".

Mark 5:1: γαδαρηνων 95,5% (Gadarenes) AV, NKJV
γεργεςηνων 4,1% (Gergesenes)
γερρασηνων 0,3% (Gerasenes) NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

NIV footnote: "Some manuscripts *Gadarenes*; other manuscripts *Gergesenes*".

Luke 8:26: γαδαρηνων 97% (Gadarenes) AV, NKJV
γεργεςηνων 2% (Gergesenes) TEV
γερρασηνων 0,3% (Gerasenes) NIV, NASB, LB, etc.

NIV footnote: "Some manuscripts *Gadarenes*; other manuscripts *Gergesenes*; also in verse 37".

Luke 8:37: γαδαρηνων 96% (Gadarenes) AV, NKJV
γεργεςηνων 3,5% (Gergesenes) TEV
γερρασηνων 0,3% (Gerasenes) NIV, NASB, LB, etc.

I will begin with Mark. Jesus arrived at "the region [not 'province'] of the Gadarenes". Gadara was the capital city of the Roman province of Perara, located some six miles from the Sea of Galilee. Since Mark was writing for a Roman audience,¹ "the region of the Gadarenes" was a perfectly reasonable description of the site. Lamentably, the eclectic Greek text currently in vogue follows about five Greek manuscripts of objectively inferior quality (against at least 1,700 better ones) in reading 'Gerasenes' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The NIV footnote is dishonest: to use 'some' to describe over 1,600 manuscripts against five is a dishonest use of the Queen's English (to use 'others' to refer to some 60 is acceptable).

Luke also has Jesus arriving at "the region of the Gadarenes". Since he was writing for a Greek audience, he follows Mark's example. Again NIV has a dishonest footnote. It is most likely that 'Gerasa' is a fiction, a 'place' that never existed. On the other hand, 'Gergesa'

¹ Although, as explained elsewhere, I understand that Matthew was published first, and Mark probably had a copy open before him as he wrote, yet he deliberately changed Matthew's 'Gergesenes' to 'Gadarenes'—to his intended Roman audience 'Gergesa' would be unknown, while some would indeed know about 'Gadara'.

certainly did exist, although we no longer know the exact location. As I will explain while discussing Matthew, below, I have no doubt that it was a village near the spot where Jesus landed.

Matthew clearly wrote 'Gergesenes' rather than 'Gadarenes'. Since he was writing for a Jewish audience, and many Galileans would be quite familiar with the Sea of Galilee, he provided a more localized description. Further, try to picture the events in your mind. Do you suppose that the swineherds ran six miles to Gadara? The populace would certainly not run the six miles back. All of that would have taken entirely too long. To me it is obvious that there was a village close by, probably within half a mile, called 'Gergesa'. It was to that village that the swineherds ran, told their story, and brought the residents back. Galileans familiar with the Sea of Galilee would certainly recognize 'Gergesa'.

Not only does Matthew name a different place, he affirms that there were really two demonized men, whereas Mark and Luke mention only one. As a former tax collector, numerical precision was important to Matthew. Neither Mark nor Luke use the number 'one'; they merely commented on the more prominent of the two, the one who wanted to go with Jesus. I understand that indeed there were two of them.

6) Abiathar is not Ahimelech—Mark 2:26 X 1 Samuel 21:1

Some of my readers may be aware that this verse has destroyed the faith of at least one scholar in our day, although he was reared in an evangelical home. He understood Jesus to be saying that Abiathar was the priest with whom David dealt, when in fact it was his father, Ahimelech. If Jesus stated an historical error as fact, then he could not be God. So he turned his back on Jesus. I consider that his decision was lamentable and unnecessary, and in the interest of helping others who may be troubled by this verse, I offer the following explanation:

"How he entered the house of God (making Abiathar high priest) and ate the consecrated bread, which only priests are permitted to eat, and shared it with those who were with him."

My rendering is rather different than the 'in the days of Abiathar the high priest' of the AV, NKJV and NIV. We are translating three Greek words that very literally would be 'upon Abiathar high-priest' (but the preposition here, *ἐπι*, is the most versatile of the Greek prepositions, and one of its many meanings/uses is 'toward'—the standard lexicon, BDAG, lists fully eighteen areas of meaning, quite apart from sub-divisions). When we go back to the Old Testament account, we discover that David actually conversed with Ahimelech, Abiathar's father, who was the high priest at that moment (1 Samuel 21:1-9). Within a few days Saul massacred Ahimelech and 84 other priests (1 Samuel 22:16-18), but his son Abiathar escaped and went to David, taking the ephod with him (1 Samuel 22:20-23; 23:6). That David could use it to inquire of the LORD rather suggests that it had to be the ephod that only the high priest wore, since only that ephod had the Urim and Thummim (1 Samuel 23:9-12; cf. Numbers 27:21, Ezra 2:63).

That ephod was to a high priest like the crown was to a king; so how could Abiathar have it? The Text states that David's visit filled Ahimelech with fear, presumably because he too saw Doeg the Edomite and figured what would happen. Now why was not Abiathar taken with

the others? I suggest that Ahimelech foresaw what would happen (Doeg probably took off immediately, and Ahimelech figured he would not have much time), so he deliberately consecrated Abiathar, gave him the ephod, and told him to hide—he probably did it that very day (once the soldiers arrived to arrest Ahimelech and the other 84, it would be too late). Abiathar escaped, but carried the news of the massacre with him; only now he was the high priest.

Putting it all together, it was David's visit that resulted in Abiathar's becoming high priest prematurely, as David himself recognized, and to which Jesus alluded in passing (which is why I used parentheses). But why would Jesus allude to that? I suppose because the Bible is straightforward about the consequences of sin, and David lied to Ahimelech. Although Jesus was using David's eating that bread as an example, He did not wish to gloss over the sin, and its consequences.

Recall that Jesus was addressing Pharisees, who were steeped in the OT Scriptures. A notorious case like Saul's massacre of 85 priests would be very well known. And of course, none of the NT had yet been written, so any understanding of what Jesus said had to be based on 1 Samuel ("Have you never read . . . ?"). If we today wish to understand this passage, we need to place ourselves in the context recorded in Mark 2:23-28. The Pharisees would understand that if Abiathar was in possession of the ephod with the Urim and Thummim, then he was the high priest. And how did he get that way? He got that way because of David's visit. It was an immediate consequence of that visit.

Some may object that 'making' is a verb, not a preposition. Well, the 'in the days of' of the AV, etc., though not a verb, is a phrase. Both a pronoun and an adverb may stand for a phrase, and a preposition may as well. TEV and Phillips actually use a verb: 'when . . . was'; NLT has 'during the days when . . . was'. Where the others used from two to five words, I used only one.

7) Bethsaida, or Tiberias?—Luke X John

The question is: just where did the feeding of the 5,000 men take place? Matthew 14:13 and Mark 6:32 merely say that it was in a deserted spot, without identification. But Luke 9:10 says it was in "a deserted place belonging to a town named Bethsaida",¹ while John 6:23 informs us that the spot was near the town of Tiberias. Well now, Tiberias was located on the west side of the Sea, a mile or two above the place where the Jordan River leaves the Sea. But Bethsaida was at the top of the Sea, a little to the east of where the Jordan enters the Sea. What to do?

We may deduce from Mark 6:31 and John 6:17 and 24 that Jesus and His disciples started out from Capernaum, where Jesus had His base of operations. It happens that Capernaum, like Bethsaida, was situated at the top of the Sea, but a little to the west of the entrance of the

¹ Lamentably, the eclectic Greek text currently in vogue, following a mere half of one percent of the Greek manuscripts (and that half made up of objectively inferior ones), says that they went "to a town named Bethsaida". This is an obvious perversity because two verses later the same text has them in a deserted place. So the editors of that text make Luke contradict himself, as well as contradicting the other three Gospels, since all agree that the place was deserted. Unfortunately, this perversity is duly reproduced by NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.

Jordan. To go from Capernaum to Bethsaida by boat one would not get far from the shore. But John 6:1 says that Jesus "went over the Sea of Galilee", and that agrees better with Tiberias, since there is a large bay between Capernaum and Tiberias, although they are both on the west side of the Sea—they crossed close to ten miles of water. Further, after the feast, Matthew 14:22 says they went by boat "to the other side", and verse 24 has them "in the middle of the Sea"; while Mark 6:45 says that they went by boat "to the other side, to Bethsaida", and verse 47 has them "in the middle of the Sea"; and John 6:17 says that they "started to cross the Sea toward Capernaum", and verse 19 that "they had rowed some three or four miles".

Well now, to stay close to the shore is one thing, to go over the Sea is another. Further, if they were already in or near Bethsaida, how could they cross the Sea in order to get there (Mark 6:45)? It becomes clear that the miracle in fact took place near Tiberias, as John affirms. But that raises another difficulty: how could a property near Tiberias 'belong' to Bethsaida (Luke 9:10)? Either it had been deeded to the town somehow, or, more likely, it belonged to a family that lived in Bethsaida. My reason for saying this is based on the Text.

John 6:17 says that they "started toward Capernaum", while Mark 6:45 says that they went "to Bethsaida". Since the two towns were a short distance apart, at the beginning of the crossing the direction would be virtually the same. I understand that they did indeed go to Bethsaida, but spent very little time there, going from there directly to Genesaret. Indeed, the day after the miracle Jesus was already back in Capernaum (John 6:24-25). But just why did they make that side trip to Bethsaida (Genesaret lies just south of Capernaum)? I imagine the following: a property near Tiberias, but belonging to someone in Bethsaida, would likely be deserted, a great place for a picnic. I suppose that Jesus had permission to use the place, when He wanted to get away, but no one had foreseen a crowd of perhaps 15,000 (5,000 men plus women and children). Please pardon the unpleasant consideration, but what effect would a crowd that size have on the hygiene and appearance of the place? I conclude that Jesus felt obligated to give a report to the owner, in Bethsaida.

While we are here, allow me to call attention to another miracle Jesus performed, that you will not find in the usual lists. As already noted, Matthew 14:24 and Mark 6:46 say that they were in the middle of the Sea, but John 6:19 is more precise, saying that they had gone perhaps four miles. It happens that a crossing from Tiberias to Bethsaida would involve about eight miles. And now, attention please to John 6:21, "Then they wanted to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going". If the total distance was eight miles, and they had only managed half of it, then Jesus transported the boat four miles instantly. Now that was a fair sized miracle, to transport a boat four miles in an instant! You will not find this miracle in most lists, because few people take the time to give a detailed examination to the Sacred Text.

8) 'Cainan' #2—Luke 3:36 X Genesis 11:12

"35 of Serug, of Reu, of Peleg, of Eber, of Shela, 36 of Cainan, of Arphaxad, of Shem, of Noah, of Lamech,"

There are several spelling variations that together are attested by almost 1% of the MSS; 99% have *Καϊναν*. Apparently only two omit, P^{75v} and D, but no printed text follows their lead. So

there is no reasonable doubt that Luke in fact wrote that Shelah was fathered by Cainan, not Arphaxad. This Cainan has been widely used to justify treating the genealogies in Genesis like accordions—if one name was demonstrably left out in the Genesis account, then who knows how many others were also left out. This Cainan is also used to deny the validity of constructing a strict chronology based on the time spans given in the genealogies.

But where did Luke get this information? The LXX contains Cainan in Genesis 11:12, but is so different from the Massoretic text here that it looks like fiction. Recall that the LXX we know is based on codices Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus, produced centuries after Luke. It is more likely that our LXX is based on Luke than vice versa. Where then did Luke get it? I understand that Luke obtained the information about this Cainan from records existing in his day, and being correct information was led by the Holy Spirit to include it in his Gospel. Just like Jude, who quoted Enoch—Enoch’s prophecy must have been in existence in Jude’s day, but we have no copy in Hebrew today (though Jews are reported to have used one so recently as the 13th century A.D.); similarly we have no copy of Luke’s source.¹

This brief note was inspired by the discussion of the subject given by Dr. Floyd N. Jones in *Chronology of the Old Testament*² (which book comes close to solving all the alleged numerical discrepancies in the OT, at least as I see it). However, the explanation that follows is original with me (if anyone else has proposed it, I am unaware). Let’s recall the exact wording of Genesis 11:12-13. “Arphaxad lived thirty-five years and begot Salah; after he begot Salah, Arphaxad lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters.”

The verb ‘begot’ requires that Salah be a blood descendent of Arphaxad, not adopted. He could be a grandson, the son of a son of Arphaxad, or even a great-grandson, etc., except that in this case the time frame only has room for one intervening generation. The plain meaning of the formula in the Text, ‘W lived X years and begot Y; after W begot Y he lived Z years,’ is that W was X years old when Y was born, is it not?³ I take the clear meaning of the Hebrew Text to be that Arphaxad was 35 years old when Salah was born, whatever we may decide to do about ‘Cainan’.

¹ Let us recall Luke’s stated purpose in writing: “It seemed good to me also, most excellent Theophilus, having taken careful note of everything from Above, to write to you with precision and in sequence, so that you may know the certainty of the things in which you were instructed” (Luke 1:3-4). Given his stated purpose in writing, Luke’s account needs to be historically accurate (cf. 2:2 and 3:1). So then, I take it that the Holy Spirit guided Luke to include Cainan #2; I will argue the same for Joram below. While I am on this tack, my solution to the ‘Jeremiah’ problem in Matthew 27:9-10 is similar. Daniel (9:2) refers to “the books” (plural) in connection with Jeremiah the prophet. So I assume that Matthew had access to other writings of Jeremiah, of which no copy survives.

² *Chronology of the Old Testament: A Return to the Basics* (Floyd Nolen Jones, The Woodlands, TX: Kings Word Press, 1999, pp. 29-36). (This is the 14th edition, revised and enlarged—the 1st came out in 1993.) I imagine that many readers may feel uncomfortable with the author’s very dogmatic way of expressing himself, but I would urge them to filter out the rhetorical style and concentrate on the substantial arguments, that are of extraordinary value. For example, his solution to the conundrum of the reigns of the kings on the two sides of the divided monarchy is simply brilliant, and to my mind obviously correct, leaving no loose ends. (In this connection, he debunks the claims of Edwin R. Thiele and William F. Albright.)

³ It follows that this formula destroys the ‘accordion’ gambit. There were precisely 130 years between Adam and Seth, 105 between Seth and Enosh, 90 between Enosh and Cainan¹, etc., etc.

Let us try to imagine the situation in the years immediately following the Flood. After the Flood the 'name of the game' was to replenish the earth. Indeed, the divine command was: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 9:1). So, whom could Noah's grandsons marry? Obviously their cousins, Noah's granddaughters. There would be an urgency to reproduce—thus, the girls would be married off at puberty, and the boys would not be wasting around either. The women would be giving birth as often as they possibly could. Really, the absolute top priority would be to increase the number of people.

Arphaxad was born two years after the flood, but his wife could have been born a year or two earlier. (The Sacred Text is clear to the effect that only eight souls entered the ark, but some of the women could have conceived during the Flood.) Thus, Arphaxad could have fathered "Cainan" when he was 17/18. Similarly, Cainan could have fathered Salah when he was 17/18. In this way Arphaxad could be said to have "begotten" Salah when he was 35. Cainan could have died early or been passed over in Genesis because the time span did not constitute a 'generation', or both. Or, as things got back to normal, culturally speaking, the haste with which Arphaxad and Cainan procreated might have been viewed as unseemly. The expedient of omitting Cainan would make the account more 'normal' while preserving precision as to the elapsed time.

But Luke would be correct in saying that Salah was "of" Cainan who was "of" Arphaxad. Salah was Arphaxad's grandson. In any case, the Messianic line was passed on by Salah. Without Luke's record I, for one, would never have stopped to consider what must have happened immediately following the Flood—the absolute priority must have been to increase the number of people.

9) Entering, or leaving Jericho?—Luke 18:35, 19:1 X Mark 10:46 X Matthew 20:29-30

In the NKJV, Luke 18:35 and 19:1 read like this: "Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. . . . Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho." Luke plainly states that Jesus healed a blind man before entering Jericho (he mentions only one, but does not say that there was only one). And Mark 10:46 reads like this: "Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging." Mark plainly states that Jesus healed a blind man upon leaving Jericho (he names the blind man, referring only to him, but does not say that there was only one). And Matthew 20:29-30 reads like this: "Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, . . ." Matthew plainly states that Jesus healed two blind men upon leaving Jericho.

Well now, entering is one thing, and leaving is another, so which was it? Strange to relate, it was both! The Jericho that Joshua destroyed had been rebuilt (at least partially), and was inhabited. But in Jesus' day Herod had built a new Jericho, perhaps a kilometer away from the old one, also inhabited. So where would an intelligent beggar place himself? Presumably between the two towns. I take it that all three of the accounts before us transpired between the two Jerichos, so Jesus was leaving one and entering the other. There is no discrepancy. Luke and Mark probably give us the same incident, but what about Mathew? Besides stating

that the men were two, he says that Jesus “touched their eyes”, whereas according to Luke and Mark He only spoke. It is entirely probable that there was more than one beggar along that stretch of road, and any shouting could be heard for quite a ways. I take it that Matthew records a different incident. I suppose that Bartimaeus was healed first, and he shouted so loud that the two heard it all and knew what to do when their turn came.

10) Poor Pilate—wrong place, wrong time

According to John 18:12, there was a *chiliarch* among those who went to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. Well now, a *chiliarch* commanded a thousand men (or perhaps a cohort, about 600). There would scarcely be more than one of them stationed in Jerusalem, so he was presumably the top commanding military officer in town. So what was the top military commander doing in Gethsemane at 2:00 a.m.? If he was there, it was because the governor, Pilate, had sent him. And why would Pilate do something like that? He had his reasons.

As governor, Pilate represented the Roman Empire. He was responsible for keeping the peace, according to Caesar’s interests. In those days the city of Jerusalem was not very big, and keeping well informed would not have been difficult. Pilate was doubtless well aware of Jesus, and would have followed His career with attention. Someone with a large public following could be a threat. Moreover, since it was the chief priests’ man who led the expedition, and they kept the prisoner, it is clear that they had gone to Pilate and convinced him that Jesus represented enough of a threat that something needed to be done about it. (Jesus had used violence in cleansing the temple, as well as totally disregarding their authority. Why would He not do the same against Rome?) Even so, just why Pilate decided to send his *chiliarch* is hard to say; perhaps to be sure that things were done professionally, as well as to form a professional opinion as to the nature of the threat. Certain it is that Pilate and the chief priests had agreed on a plan of action, as John makes clear, a plan that included death by crucifixion.

Both Mark 15:1 and John 18:28 inform us that it was early morning when Jesus was taken to Pilate, but John 19:14 states that it was around 6:00 a.m. when Pilate pronounced sentence. Even allowing that ‘around’ 6:00 was perhaps five or ten minutes after the hour, it could not have been later than 5:30 when the chief priests pounded on Pilate’s door. Now then, we all know that one just does not go pounding on a governor’s door at such an hour, especially a conquered people. Not only that, Pilate was dressed and waiting. Actually, he had doubtless been up, waiting for the *chiliarch*’s report. But at that point he changed the game-plan. He went out and asked, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” (John 18:29). Their reply was petulant, “If he were not an evil-doer we would not have handed him over to you.” They thought that they had an agreement, but something had made Pilate change his mind.

To understand what happened, we need to go back to Gethsemane, and the *chiliarch*. The traitor had told them that there would be eleven men besides Jesus, and that they had two swords (Luke 22:38). But they were country bumpkins with no fighting ability. Even so, the *chiliarch* probably had over twice as many men, and all were armed—he doubtless expected some attempt at resistance. When they arrived and stated their business, Jesus calmly identified Himself, but at His word they all fell to the ground (John 18:6). Later, after the

traitor's kiss, Peter managed to slice off an ear, but not only did Jesus tell him to quit it, He healed the ear (Luke 22:51)! Then the disciples abandoned Jesus, and He allowed Himself to be bound, without resistance. So what sort of report would the *chiliarch* give to Pilate? It was more than obvious that Jesus was no wild-eyed insurrectionist. He had supernatural power, and yet submitted peacefully. And Jesus was impressive! Pilate had to conclude that the picture that the chief priests had painted was wrong, and so the agreement could not stand.

Now a *chiliarch* was a hardened and seasoned warrior, not easily impressed. He probably told Pilate that if it were up to him, he would leave Jesus alone! But Pilate had to deal with the chief priests, and he knew it would not be easy. In Acts 3:13 Peter affirms that Pilate was determined to let Jesus go, but the chief priests got what they wanted in the end. Close attention to the Record makes clear that Peter's affirmation is correct. Pilate wanted no part of killing Jesus! He made repeated attempts to 'get off the hook'. Consider:

1) Pilate answered their petulant response with, "You take him and judge him according to your law." To this they responded, "We are not permitted to execute anyone." This exchange indicates that execution had been in the agreement, but Pilate also rubbed salt in their wound, making them recognize that they were a subjugated people. Even so, he told them to do the judging, which would make them responsible.

2) Luke 23:2 probably gives the first concrete accusation: "We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, declaring himself to be Christ, a king." The part about taxes was a plain lie, but the part about the Christ was true. In any case, Pilate could not safely ignore such accusations, so he interrogated Jesus.

3) Matthew 27:11, Mark 15:2, Luke 23:3 and John 18:33-38 all refer to this first interrogation. It revolved around the kingship of Jesus, which could be a crime against Caesar. Jesus affirms that He is a king, but His kingdom "is not of this world" (John 18:36). A kingdom that was not of this world would not represent a threat to Rome. So Pilate went out and said to the crowd, "I find no crime in him at all." If there was no crime, there should be no punishment.

4) This led to a barrage of further accusations, to which Jesus did not answer, which surprised Pilate (Matthew 27:12-14, Mark 15:3-5 and Luke 23:5). But among the accusations they mentioned Galilee, which allowed Pilate to learn that Jesus was a Galilean, thereby belonging to Herod's jurisdiction. As 'luck' would have it, Herod was in town and nearby. (He had doubtless been informed about what was afoot, since he also was up and dressed at that early hour.)

5) So Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, probably hoping that Herod would take responsibility. Luke is the only one who records this side-trip (23:7-12). But Jesus refused to speak; and what can you do with someone who won't talk? From the Lord's point of view, Herod was irrelevant; it was Pilate who had the authority to crucify. So, frustrated, Herod sent Him back, only now arrayed in a gorgeous robe. The whole side-trip probably took no more than fifteen minutes.

6) Poor Pilate, what was he to do? Next he tried the 'releasing a prisoner at Passover' gambit, hoping to release Jesus, but the crowd demanded Barabbas. (Both Matthew and Mark record that Pilate knew that the chief priests had acted out of envy.) In the middle of this proceeding, Pilate received a message from his wife, about her dream (Matthew 27:19) [she

had probably been told why he didn't go to bed that night]. When Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus, they demanded that he be crucified. When Pilate asked what evil Jesus had done, they just yelled all the louder. Luke gives us a little further information. Pilate affirmed that neither he nor Herod had found guilt in Jesus, but because of their fury he offered to flog Jesus, hoping that would appease them.

7) Matthew, Mark and John give some account of the treatment Jesus received from the soldiers. They made a crown of thorns, probably poisonous, and then drove the thorns into His scalp by beating on the crown with a rod. The poison would cause the scalp to swell, and blood would ooze from the wounds. They covered His face with spittle. Although none of the Evangelists mentions it, Isaiah 50:6 was presumably fulfilled as well—a soldier grabbing a fistful of beard and giving a violent yank would tear away the skin holding the hair, which would leave a painful and ugly wound. The total effect must have been horrible, leaving Jesus unrecognizable—Isaiah 52:14 was literally fulfilled. Then Pilate had Him brought out and said, “Look at the man!” (He had repeated that he found no crime in Him.) Pilate was hoping that when the crowd saw how much Jesus had already suffered, they would be satisfied, but it only made them worse!

8) To their “Crucify! Crucify him!” Pilate answered, “You take and crucify him, because I find no crime in him.” The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to our law he ought to die, because he made himself ‘Son of God!’” That statement made Pilate more afraid than ever (John 19:6-8). So he took Jesus inside for a second interview. Although Pilate represented the greatest temporal power at that time, Jesus calmly affirmed that there was a higher power, and that He, Jesus, represented that higher power. It appears to me that Pilate at least half believed Him, because John 19:12 says, “From that moment Pilate really tried to release Him.” But the Jews did an ‘end run’.

9) They kept shouting: “If you release this fellow you are no friend of Caesar’s! Whoever makes himself a king is opposing Caesar!” Oops! Pilate owed his position to Caesar’s good graces, and simply could not afford to do something that could be construed (even with a little twisting) as treason. He was beaten and knew it. But he still managed to get them to declare that their only king was Caesar.

10) Sitting on the judgment seat, Pilate called for water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said: “I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man. It’s your problem!” So in answer all the people said, “His blood be upon us and upon our children!” (Matthew 27:24-25). Terrible, terrible, terrible! This may well be the worst curse that any parents ever placed upon their descendants. Since Pilate declared Jesus to be righteous, and since the Jews took full responsibility, I suspect that God will not hold Pilate responsible. After all, he was fulfilling the Plan: Jesus had to die by crucifixion.

Before bringing this article to a close, I would like to call attention to several further items that bear on Pilate’s attitude.

1) Pilate had Jesus’ ‘crime’ posted in *three* languages; he evidently wanted as wide an audience as possible. All four Gospels mention this, and from them we may understand that the full Accusation was: This is Jesus the Natsorean, the King of the Jews. That Pilate put “**the Natsorean**” (not Natsarene [Nazarene]) indicates that he had researched Jesus. The

reference is to Isaiah 11:1; Jesus was David's Branch, the Messiah. Pilate was making a statement. When the chief priests complained, he answered, "What I have written, I have written!" (John 19:21-22).

2) All four Gospels mention the burial, but only Mark registers that when Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for permission to remove Jesus' body, Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead. So he summoned the centurion to confirm the fact (15:44-45). As soon as Jesus died, the centurion most probably had left the scene, going back to headquarters, leaving the four soldiers to guard the two malefactors. Of course Pilate had experienced the three hours of darkness, and had felt the earthquake, but he was not on the scene. He knew that a person on a cross dies from asphyxiation. The weight of the body pushes the diaphragm against the lungs and he can't breathe. Nailing the feet was a sadistic procedure that prolonged the agony—rather than die they would push against the nail to get a breath. Finally, when too weak to do that they would die for lack of air. (That is why they broke the legs of the two thieves; they then died within a few minutes.) Jesus had been on the cross for six hours, but victims could last several times that long. Whether just then or later, Pilate doubtless got a full report from the centurion. Jesus had given a great shout and then died. Obviously, if you are dying without air, you can't shout! The centurion knew that the cross had not killed Jesus. But what mere human can just tell his spirit to leave? $2 + 2 = 4$. Jesus had to be the Son of God.

3) Only Matthew mentions the sealing and guarding of the tomb (27:62-66). The chief priests went to Pilate requesting that the tomb be made secure until the third day. To this Pilate replied, "You have a guard; go make it as secure as you can!" His turn of phrase is interesting, "make it as secure as you can". In other words, he was hinting that it would not make any difference. I rather suspect that Pilate believed that Jesus would do what He said.

We learn from Tertullian that Pilate wrote a letter to the emperor suggesting that Jesus be added to the roster of Roman deities. Now to make a suggestion like that involved an element of risk. But evidently Pilate was sufficiently convinced that he took the risk. If I someday meet Pilate in Heaven, I will not be surprised. If his experience with Jesus resulted in his salvation, Pilate would likely suggest a different title for this study: Blessed Pilate—right place, right time!

11) How long was Jesus in the tomb?

Many books and articles have been written about this question. The principal difficulty derives from Jesus' own use of several different expressions to describe that time. Referring to the time period between His death and resurrection He Himself said—"the third day", "after three days" and "three days and three nights". A careful look at all the relevant passages makes clear that the three phrases are not equal candidates. Consider:

There is only one instance of 'three days and three nights', to be found in Matthew 12:40. Jesus cites the experience of Jonah (Jonah 1:17) and says that He will have a similar experience. That we are in the presence of a Hebrew idiom will become apparent from what follows.

There are just two instances of ‘after three days’, to be found in Mark 8:31 and Matthew 27:63. In Mark Jesus is cited in an indirect quote, as Jesus tells the disciples what is going to happen to Him. In Matthew Jesus is quoted by the Jewish leaders as they ask Pilate to guard the tomb; but notice that in verse 64 they go on to say, “until the third day”, so the two phrases would appear to be synonymous.

As for ‘the third day’, there are eleven direct instances, plus three related ones. Proper hermeneutic procedure requires that we interpret the few in terms of the many, and not the reverse. In Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19; Mark 9:31, 10:34;¹ Luke 9:22, 18:33, Jesus is telling the disciples what is going to happen to Him. In Luke 24:7 the angel quotes Jesus to the women at the empty tomb. In Luke 24:46 the resurrected Jesus is speaking with the disciples. In Acts 10:40 Peter is preaching to Cornelius. In 1 Corinthians 15:4 Paul makes a statement. Those are the eleven direct instances. In Luke 24:21 Cleopas says to Jesus, “today is the third day since these things happened”—the ‘these things’ refers to the crucifixion, and the ‘today’ includes the resurrection, since he cites the women. In John 2:19 Jesus says, “destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it”. In Luke 13:32 Jesus sends a message to Herod, “the third day I will be perfected”. Those are the three related instances, for a total of fourteen. Well, the last one is marginal, so make it thirteen.

I suppose that all human cultures have the tendency to think that their way of seeing things is right, and all others wrong. But what to do when conflicts arise? When attempting to understand a given event, it is the culture within which it happened that must be respected. Jews and Brazilians handle time differently than do ‘Westerners’ in general. Here in Brazil, after church, we often say, “I’ll see you in eight days”, which means the next Sunday. The day in which you are is included in the number. We have biblical basis; consider John 20:26. “Well, after eight days His disciples were inside again, and Thomas with them.” ‘Eight days’ from when? “Then at evening on that first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the middle” (John 20:19). The ‘first day of the week’ is Sunday; the use of “that” indicates that it was Resurrection Sunday. With few exceptions, the Church Universal has always understood that Jesus arose on a Sunday, as the Text plainly indicates. In John 20:26 “after eight days” means the next Sunday. To the ‘western’ mind, the use of ‘after’ is misleading; ‘after eight days’ would place one in the ninth day. But we are in the presence of a Hebrew idiom, wherein ‘after eight days’ = ‘the eighth day’. This is plainly indicated in Matthew 27:63-64, where ‘after three days’ = ‘until the third day’. But as already noted, the beginning day is included in the number; so ‘after eight days’ = ‘the eighth day’ = seven consecutive solar days of elapsed time (although the first and last solar day may not be a full 24 hours).

Now consider Luke 23:53-24:1. “Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock, where no one had ever been laid. **54** It was a Preparation day; the Sabbath was drawing near. **55** The women who had come with Him from Galilee followed along, and they saw the tomb and how His body was placed there. **56** Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment. **1** Then on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb

¹ In Mark 10:34 the eclectic text currently in vogue reads ‘after three days’, following a mere 0.7% of the extant Greek manuscripts, which manuscripts are of objectively inferior quality, demonstrably so.

carrying the spices that they had prepared, along with some others.” After the women observed the burial, they rested for one day—Sabbath is singular. They took their spices to the tomb on Sunday. It follows that Jesus was buried on Friday. Jesus was in the tomb for part of Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday—He rose ‘the third day’.

Mark 14:1 may also be of interest. “It was two days before the Passover and the Unleavened Bread.” According to a careful analysis of the sequence of events that made up the last week, at this point it was late Tuesday afternoon, probably after 6:00 p.m.—adding two days takes us to 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, but the proceedings in the upper room began after 6:00 p.m. on that Thursday, which to the Jews was already Friday. Therefore Jesus died on a Friday. We take it that “3 days and 3 nights” was an idiomatic expression that could refer to three solar days represented by some part of each, but in sequence—in this case: Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

12 Harmonizing the accounts of the ‘temptation’

The ‘temptation of Jesus’ is mentioned by three of the Gospels. Mark is very brief (1:12-13); he has the Holy Spirit ‘driving’ Jesus into the wilderness, rather than the ‘leading’ of the other two; also, he is the only one who mentions the animals. Mathew and Luke give more detailed accounts, with some discrepancies, which give rise to this note.

Matthew has, “into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil”. Luke has, “into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil”. We have no record of what Satan did during the forty days. That which is recorded happened at the end. Both Matthew and Luke agree that Jesus ate nothing during the 40 days, that at the end He was hungry, and that at that point Satan presented himself. They both record the same three tests, but in a different order, and it is this difference that requires special comment. The descriptions of the tests are not identical, but can easily be harmonized. At the end, Matthew has, “then the devil left Him, and angels came and ministered to Him”. (Mark also mentions the angels.) Luke has: “When the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.” The two statements complement each other.

I will now consider the three tests. Both begin with ‘bread’, but Matthew has “these stones”, while Luke has ‘this stone’. I assume that both are correct. Satan started with ‘these stones’ and then singled out one that looked just like a loaf and said ‘this one’. Both have Jesus responding with Deuteronomy 8:3. (Unfortunately, in Luke 4:4, less than half a percent of the extant Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “but by every word of God”, to be followed by most modern versions.)

For the second test, Matthew has the temple, while Luke has the high mountain, the third test being the reverse. So who has the correct sequence? Luke introduces both his second and third tests with the conjunction ‘and’, as if they were like separate blocks in a row. Matthew introduces his second test with a temporal adverb of sequence, ‘then’; he introduces the third with another adverb, ‘again’, one of whose uses is sequence. Since Matthew overtly states the sequence, I conclude that his order is the correct one—Luke was not concerned to give the sequence; he handles the ‘temple’ almost like an afterthought (the

introductory conjunction could be rendered 'also'). Matthew's order is also the logical sequence; there is a progression in the severity or importance of the tests.

The actual description of the temple test given by both is almost identical. Matthew says "holy city" while Luke says "Jerusalem". Satan cites Psalm 91:11-12, and Jesus responds with Deuteronomy 6:16. As for the high mountain test, Luke has a fuller description than does Matthew, but they are in harmony. In Matthew 4:10 some 12% of the Greek manuscripts omit "behind me", as in most versions; in Luke 4:8 the whole "Get behind me, Satan!" is omitted by perhaps 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts (of inferior quality), to be followed by most modern versions. (Strange to relate, in Luke 4:5 just three known Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality [against over 1,700, almost all of which are better than the three], omit "up on a high mountain the devil", to be followed by most modern versions, except that some keep 'the devil'.)

To conclude, each of the three accounts supplies some information not found in the others, but they harmonize, being complementary. The one apparent discrepancy, the order of tests two and three, has a reasonable solution.

13) 'Prophets' in Matthew 3:23

"And upon arriving he settled in a town called Natsareth [Branch-town], so that what was spoken through the prophets should be fulfilled, that He would be called a Natsorean [Branch-man]."

We know from Luke that Natsareth was Joseph's home—his house and business were waiting for him (although he had been gone for quite a while). The name of the town in Hebrew is based on the consonants נצר (*resh, tsadde, nun*), but since Hebrew is read from right to left, for us the order is reversed = n, ts, r. This word root means 'branch'. Greek has the equivalent for 'ps' and 'ks', but not for 'ts', so the transliteration used a 'dz' (*zeta*), which is the voiced counterpart of 'ts'. But when the Greek was transliterated into English it came out as 'z'! But Hebrew has a 'z', ז (*zayin*), so in transliterating back into Hebrew people assumed the consonants נזר, replacing the correct *tsadde* with *zayin*. This technical information is necessary as background for what follows.

Neither 'Nazareth' nor 'Nazarene', spelled with a *zayin*, is to be found in the Old Testament, but there is a prophetic reference to Messiah as the Branch, *netser*—Isaiah 11:1—and several to the related word, *tsemach*—Isaiah 4:2, Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15; Zechariah 3:8, 6:12. So Matthew is quite right—the prophets (plural, being at least three) referred to Christ as the Branch. Since Jesus was a man, He would be the 'Branch-man', from 'Branch-town'. Which brings us to the word 'natsorean'. The familiar 'Nazarene' (Ναζαρηνοϛ) [Natsarene] occurs in Mark 1:24, 14:67, 16:6 and Luke 4:34, but here in Matthew 2:23 and in fourteen other places, including Acts 22:8 where the glorified Jesus calls Himself that, the word is 'Natsorean' (Ναζωραιοϛ), which is quite different. (Actually, in Acts 22:8 Jesus introduced Himself to Saul as 'the Natsorean', which strict Pharisee Saul would understand as a reference to the Messiah.) I have been given to understand that the Natsareth of Jesus' day had been founded some 100 years before by a Branch family who called it Branch town; they were very much aware of the prophecies about the Branch and fully expected the Messiah to be born from among them—they called themselves Branch-people (Natsoreans). Of course everyone else thought it was a big joke and tended to look down on them. "Can anything good . . . ?"

The difficulty in this case is caused by differing phonologies; the sounds of Hebrew do not match those of Greek, or of English. Since proper names are often just transliterated, as in this case, and a translator will normally follow the phonology of the target language, what happened here was straightforward, without malice. We would have felt no inconvenience had Matthew not appealed to "the prophets". It is the false transliteration going back to Hebrew, from either Greek or English, that creates the seeming difficulty.

14) The Natsorean

Every version that I remember seeing miss-leads the reader by obliterating one of the Lord's titles, a title that the glorified Jesus Himself used when dealing with Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road. When Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?", He answered, "I am Jesus the Natsorean, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 22:8). Most versions at this place render 'Jesus of Nazareth', while some have 'Jesus the Nazarene'. For an explanation of why I use 'ts' instead of 'z', please see my article, "'Prophets' in Matthew 3:23" (prunch.org).

The familiar 'Nazarene' [Ναζαρηνος] occurs four times: Mark 1:24, 14:67, 16:6 and Luke 4:34. 'Jesus the Nazarene' would appear to be another way of saying 'Jesus of/from Nazareth', and some versions so translate the phrase. Unfortunately, the versions do the same with 'Natsorean' [Ναζωραιος], which I consider to be a serious error. Just looking at the two Greek words, they are obviously different. The Hebrew root is *netser*, 'branch', a reference to Isaiah 11.1 ('Nazareth' is a transliteration of the Hebrew name). Going back to Acts 22:8, why would Jesus waste time with the name of a town? He was dealing with a highly instructed Pharisee; He introduced Himself as David's Branch, the Messiah—a reference that Saul would immediately understand.

'Natsorean' occurs fifteen times: Matthew 2:23, 26:71; Mark 10:47; Luke 18:37, 24:19; John 18:5,7, 19:19; Acts 2:22, 3:6, 4:10, 6:14, 22:8, 24:5 and 26:9. All have the definite article, except the first one—the Natsorean; except that in Acts 24:5 Felix speaks of 'the sect of the Natsoreans'. Speaking of Felix, his use of the term 'sect' is instructive. Aside from Acts 22:8, that I have already discussed, I consider that John 19:19 deserves special comment. The title above the cross read: This is Jesus the Natsorean, the King of the Jews. Pilate had evidently researched Jesus quite well (anyone with a large following is a potential problem); I believe that he knew precisely what he was doing when he used 'Natsorean', just as he knew precisely what he was doing when he put 'the King of the Jews'. For more on the subject of Pilate, please see my article: "Poor Pilate—wrong place, wrong time" (prunch.org).

Whatever version of the Bible you are using, I would urge you to correct it at the references mentioned above, so you know when a title is being used. 'The Natsorean' needs to be added to any list of the Lord's titles.

15) *Are we to handle snakes?—Mark 16:18*

In the NKJV, Mark 16:18 reads like this: “they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”¹ The NIV renders ‘they will pick up snakes with their hands’, the ‘with their hands’ being based on just over 2% of the Greek manuscripts. As we know, there are those who take this translation literally, and believe that they must handle poisonous snakes in obedience to God. I respect their sincerity, but believe they have been misled by a faulty translation.

I would say that this particular statement of the Lord’s has been generally misunderstood. The verb in question covers a wide semantic area, one of the uses being to pick up the way a garbage man picks up a bag of trash—he does so to get rid of it (hence ‘remove’). I believe Luke 10:19 sheds light on this question. In Luke 10:19 the Lord Jesus said: “Behold, I give [so 98% of the Greek manuscripts] you **the** authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” The Lord is addressing the Seventy, not the Twelve, and others were doubtless present; further, this was said perhaps four months before His death and resurrection. It follows that this authority is not limited to the apostles, and there is no indication of a time limit. The Lord Jesus affirms that He gives us **the** authority over all the power of the enemy. In Matthew 28:18 He declares that He holds “all authority . . . in heaven and earth”, and so He has the right and the competence to delegate a portion of that authority to us. We may have any number of enemies, but the enemy is Satan. The phrase, “all the power”, presumably includes his works, followed by their consequences.

Returning to Luke 10:19, the Lord gives us the authority to “trample snakes and scorpions”. Well now, to smash the literal insect, a scorpion, you don’t need power from on High, just a slipper (if you are fast you can do it barefoot). To trample a snake I prefer a boot, but we can kill literal snakes without supernatural help. It becomes obvious that Jesus was referring to something other than reptiles and insects. I understand Mark 16:18 to be referring to the same reality—Jesus declares that certain signs will accompany the believers (the turn of phrase virtually has the effect of commands): they will expel demons, they will speak strange languages, they will remove ‘snakes’, they will place hands on the sick. (“If they drink . . .” is not a command; it refers to an eventuality.) But what did the Lord Jesus mean by ‘snakes’?

In a list of distinct activities Jesus has already referred to demons, so the ‘snakes’ must be something else. In Matthew 12:34 Jesus called the Pharisees a ‘brood of vipers’, and in 23:33, ‘snakes, brood of vipers’. In John 8:44, after they claimed God as their father, Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil”. And 1 John 3:10 makes clear that Satan has many other ‘sons’. In Revelation 20:2 we read: “He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is a slanderer, even Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years.” If Satan is a snake, then his children are also snakes. So then, I take it that our ‘snakes’ are human beings who chose to serve Satan, who sold themselves to evil. I conclude that the ‘snakes’ in Luke 10:19 are the same as those in Mark 16:18, but what of the ‘scorpions’? Since they also are of the enemy, they may be demons, in which case the term may well

¹ Since only three Greek MSS (really only two) omit Mark 16:9-20, against at least 1,700 that contain them, there can be no reasonable question as to the genuineness of those verses. For more on this subject please see the respective appendix in any recent edition of my book, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*.

include their offspring, the humanoids [see my paper, “In the Days of Noah”, available from my site: prunch.org]. I am still working on the question of just how the removal is to be done.

16) Before, or after?—2 Thessalonians 2:2 X 2:7-8

In Matthew 24:44 we read, “Therefore you also be ready, because the Son of the Man is coming at an hour that you do not suppose.” I take it that for there to be the element of surprise the Rapture of the Church must occur before the “abomination of desolation”. When the Antichrist takes his place in the Holy of Holies and declares himself to be god there will be precisely 1,290 days until the return of Christ to the earth. “An hour that you do not suppose” presumably requires a pre-‘abomination’ rapture—if the rapture is pre-wrath but post-abomination, only a fool will be taken by surprise, unless the Rapture happens immediately after the ‘abomination’ (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

We may begin with 2 Thessalonians 2:2. Some 15% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘day of the Lord’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.); the 85% that have ‘day of Christ’ (including the best line of transmission) are doubtless correct. I remember one day in a Greek exegesis class, the professor stated that one reason he preferred the ‘critical’ text (that reads ‘Lord’ here) is that it fit better with his view of eschatology—the ‘Day of Christ’ is usually associated with the Rapture and blessing of the saints, while the ‘Day of the Lord’ is usually associated with heavy judgment upon the world and unrepentant Israel, including the outpouring of wrath just before and after the Second Coming of Christ, when He returns in glory to establish His Millennial Reign. The perceived difficulty here would appear to be that while verses 1, 6 and 7 evidently relate to the Rapture, verses 3-4 and 8-10 evidently relate to the Great Tribulation and the Second Coming. What to do? Look carefully at the Text. In verse 2, why would the Thessalonian believers be “disturbed”? Someone was teaching that the Rapture had already happened and they had been left behind—I would be disturbed too! So ‘day of Christ’ is precisely correct with reference to the content of verses 1 and 2. The trouble comes in verse 3 because a clause is elided; as an aid to the reader translations usually supply a clause, preferably in italics, to show that it is an addition, as in NKJV—“*that Day will not come*”. But that would put the Rapture after the revelation of the man of sin and the ‘abomination of desolation’—definitely not congenial to certain eschatological systems. An easy ‘solution’ would be to change ‘Christ’ to ‘Lord’ in verse 2, but that would put the Rapture within the ‘day of the Lord’—also not congenial. I submit that fine-tuning our view of eschatology is preferable to tampering with the Text.

If the ‘Restrainer’ in verses 6-8 is the Holy Spirit, then the Rapture happens before the ‘abomination’, and may be viewed as its ‘trigger’. I translate verse 7 as follows: “For the mystery of the lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He removes Himself.” Perhaps more literally, ‘gets Himself out of the middle’ (the verb γιννομαι is inherently middle in voice). I would say that the Holy Spirit is the only one who satisfies the description. But if the ‘Day of Christ’ includes the Rapture, then verse 3 would appear to place the Rapture after the ‘abomination’. So where does that leave us? Although my own training was strongly ‘pre-trib’, I have moved to a ‘meso-trib’ position. If the Rapture follows immediately upon the ‘abomination’, then the ‘surprise’ factor remains untouched. If the ‘abomination’ and the Rapture happen within minutes of each other, then from God’s point of view they form a single ‘package’, and the actual sequence is not important—for all practical purposes they happen at the same time.

17) When did Jesus leave Annas?—John 18:24

After Jesus was taken prisoner in the Garden, only John mentions that He was taken first to Annas; all the others only mention His being taken to Caiaphas, where the recorded proceedings took place, although of the three only Matthew actually names him (Matthew 26:57, Mark 14:53, Luke 22:54).

So far, so good, but the difficulty begins with John 18:15, that takes up Peter's denials without further ado; but Peter's denials took place at Caiaphas' house, not Annas'. Then verses 19-23 have the high priest questioning Jesus, still at Caiaphas'. Then comes verse 24: NKJV reads, "Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest"; NIV reads, "Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest" (but a footnote offers, "Now Annas had sent him"); TEV reads, "So Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the High Priest"; while NASB reads, "Annas therefore sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest". All four of these versions have John 18:15-23 occurring in Annas' house, rather than that of Caiaphas—the NIV footnote points to the correct rendering.

It would appear that all four of the versions follow the so-called 'critical' (read 'eclectic') text, that follows some 9% of the Greek manuscripts in adding a conjunction, 'then' or 'therefore' (οὐν), after the initial verb, thereby creating the 'problem'. Following the 90%, including the best line of transmission, I render, "(Annas had sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.)". The use of parenthetical comments, or historical/cultural asides, is standard procedure for John; for a partial list see: 1:44, 2:6, 4:2,9,44, 6:4,64, 7:50, 9:14, 11:2,18-19,30-31, 12:1,6,16, 13:2,11,28-29 (there are at least a dozen more). I take it that verse 24 here is just one more instance; it is as if at this point John realizes that the reader could think that the proceedings were still going on at Annas' house. 8:25 resumes with Peter's denials. Following the correct Text, and the correct understanding thereof, John's record is not at variance with that of the other three Gospels.

18) Where is Mt. Sinai?

I invite attention to Galatians 4:25, that declares that Mt. Sinai is in Arabia: I don't know Paul's definition of 'Arabia', but what the maps call 'Mt. Sinai' probably is not the real one;¹ consider: When Moses fled from Pharaoh he stopped in Midian (Exodus 2:15). Midian lies on the east side of the eastern 'rabbit-ear' of the Red Sea (the Gulf of Aqaba), in present day Saudi Arabia. It has never been part of the so-called 'Sinai Peninsula'. It was at "Horeb, the mountain of God" that Moses saw the 'burning bush' (Exodus 3:1), and in verse 12 God tells Moses: "when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain". Mt. Horeb has always been in Midian. (Present day Saudi Arabia calls it 'el Lowz', and has it fenced off.) As God continues with Moses' commission, He specifies "three days' journey into the wilderness" (verse 18). According to Exodus 4:27 Aaron met Moses at "the mountain of God" (Horeb, in Midian), and they went together to Egypt.

¹ The difficulty here is not in the Text itself, but in the circumstance that almost all modern maps, whether in Bibles or elsewhere, place Mt. Sinai in the peninsula between the two gulfs, Suez and Aqaba; so much so that the peninsula itself is even so named. But such a location for the mount makes the Biblical account out to be ridiculous, as I explain below, and an inspired Text should not be ridiculous.

When the people left Egypt, God led them on a forced march; notice the “so as to go by day and night” (Exodus 13:21). Three days of forced march (Exodus 3:18) would have gotten them close to Ezion Geber (present day Elath), and just another two days would have put them well into Midian. But then God told them to “turn back” and “encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon” (Exodus 14:2). To do this they had to leave the established route from Egypt to Arabia, and head south into the wilderness, and this led Pharaoh to conclude that they had lost their way (obviously he would have spies following them, mounted on good horses, to keep him informed). It would have been simply impossible for them to lose their way between Goshen and the western arm of the Red Sea (the Gulf of Suez), but this is what those who place Mt. Sinai in today’s ‘Sinai Peninsula’ are obliged to say—an evident stupidity. The Israelites would have hunted and explored all over that area, down through the years. (And why the chariots? Pharaoh could have surrounded them with foot soldiers.)

God led them down a ravine called ‘Wadi Watir’ which comes out on a surprisingly large beach called ‘Nuweiba’ (it is the only beach on that gulf large enough to accommodate that crowd of people and animals). Most of the Gulf of Aqaba is many hundreds of feet deep, with sheer sides, but precisely at Nuweiba there is a land bridge not far below the surface that goes from shore to shore, the width of the gulf at that point being close to 10 miles—the width of the land bridge is several hundred yards, so there was an ample ‘causeway’ for the crossing. The ravine that opens out on Nuweiba is narrow, with steep sides, so when God moved the pillar of cloud to the mouth of the ravine, Pharaoh and his chariots were blocked. They could not pass the pillar, they could not climb the sides of the ravine with chariots, and with over six hundred chariots in a narrow ravine they would have a proper ‘gridlock’ (lots of unhappy horses!). I suppose that God removed the pillar of cloud while part of the crowd was still on the land bridge, which encouraged Pharaoh to chase after them; and we know the rest of the story. If God let them get out to the middle, they would be five miles from either shore, too far for most people to swim.¹ I take it that God’s purpose was to destroy the Egyptian army so it could not be a threat to Israel in the early years.

19) Who bought what from whom, and where?—Stephen X Genesis

Acts 7:15-16—“So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers; and they were transferred to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor of Shechem.”

When we compare this text with the relevant passages in Genesis, we appear to be confronted with some discrepancies. Who bought what from whom, and where? Genesis 33:19 informs us that Jacob bought a plot from Hamor, in Shechem. On the other hand, Genesis 23:16-20 explains that Abraham bought an area that included the cave of Machpelah from Ephron, in Hebron. That cave became the sepulcher of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaac and Rebecca, and of Jacob and Lea, because Jacob insisted upon being buried there, as indeed he was (Genesis 49:29-30, 50:13). Looking again at Acts 7, it was ‘our fathers’ that were buried in Shechem, not Jacob. Indeed, Joshua 24:32 states explicitly that Joseph’s bones were buried in Shechem.

¹ In our day chariot pieces have been discovered along that land bridge.

Yes but, whenever did Abraham buy anything in Shechem? I believe Genesis 12:6-7 gives us the clue. Abraham stopped in Shechem and built an altar. Now then, to build on someone else's property, with that someone looking on, probably won't work very well. I believe we may reasonably deduce that Abraham bought a plot "from the sons of Hamor of Shechem". The 'Hamor' of Jacob's day would be a descendant of the 'Hamor' in Abraham's (sons were often named after their fathers). In Genesis 14:14 we read that Abraham "armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house". If we add women and children, the total number of people under Abraham's command was probably over a thousand. Well now, with such a crowd it is not at all unlikely that someone died while they were stopped at Shechem. (People older than Abraham would not have been 'born in his own house', but there were doubtless older persons in that crowd.) In that event Abraham would need space for a cemetery, if the plot he had already bought for the altar wasn't big enough, or appropriate. That sort of information may have been available to Stephen from an extra-biblical document, or he may have figured it out as I have done (in his case guided by the Holy Spirit—Acts 7:55).

Going back to Genesis 33:19, it is possible that Jacob increased the area that Abraham had bought, by purchase. But why were all of Jacob's sons buried in Shechem? I believe the answer lies in Genesis 34:27-29. We read that Jacob's sons killed all the men of Shechem, looted everything, but kept the women and children. And what do you suppose they did with the women? So where did you think they found wives for so many men? They got them from Shechem. Since Shechem was the source of their wives and material possessions, it would be a natural place for them to be buried.

To conclude: there is no discrepancy. Both Abraham and Jacob bought land in Shechem. It was Jacob's sons who were buried there, not Jacob himself.

20) Did the cross kill Jesus?—John 10:18 X Mark 15:39, John 19:30, Matthew 27:50, Luke 23:46

In the NKJV, John 10:17-18 reads like this: "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." Please notice: "**No one takes it from me**". That includes Pilate, etc. In Matthew 27:50 and John 19:30 the Text states that Jesus "dismissed His spirit". Now consider Mark 15:39. "So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God!'" Now what could convince a hardened Roman centurion? He had doubtless witnessed no end of crucifixions; he knew that the victim died of asphyxiation. Hanging from one's hands, the diaphragm is pressed against the lungs, and the victim can't breathe. Nailing the feet was a sadistic procedure, to prolong the agony—in spite of the pain, the victim would push up so he could get a breath, until finally too worn out to do so. (That is why the Pharisees requested Pilate to have the legs broken; then they died within minutes.) Now then, someone who is dying asphyxiated does not give a tremendous shout; but ordinary people cannot just tell their spirit to leave. So when that centurion observed that Jesus gave a tremendous shout and then immediately died, he drew the obvious conclusion: he was looking at a supernatural

being. The cross did not kill Jesus; He gave His life voluntarily, for you and me. Thank you, Lord!

21) How many animals?—Matthew 21:1-7 X Mark 11:1-10, Luke 19:29-36, John 12:12-15

Mark, Luke and John are agreed in mentioning a single animal, a donkey colt. It was loosed, brought to Jesus, garments placed upon it, and then Jesus rode on it. Matthew insists on telling us that there were really two animals, the colt and its mother. The AV (KJV) has a most unfortunate translation of both Matthew 21:5 and Zechariah 9:9 (that has been corrected in the NKJV, fortunately). In Zechariah the AV has, “riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” In Matthew the AV has, “sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.” The obvious difficulty is that the AV makes Jesus ride two animals, when in fact He only rode one. For the correct rendering of both Zechariah and Matthew, at this point, please see the NKJV. That said, however, the fact remains that Matthew clearly has the disciples fetching two animals and placing garments on both.

Why do you suppose the Holy Spirit had Matthew supply the added information? I was not there, of course, but I offer my understanding of the event. Mark and Luke specify that no one had ever sat on the colt; they say that the colt was tied, but Matthew says it was really the mother that was tied. Evidently the colt was so young that it was still staying close to ‘mother’, so if she was tied, he was too, in effect (they were out in the street, and that may have been a new experience for the colt). Jesus was going to subject the colt to a strange and even frightening situation. From the peace and quiet of his little village, he would be surrounded by a shouting crowd. Strange things would be put on his back, and then someone who was probably bigger and heavier than he was would sit on him! I believe that Jesus had the mother brought along as moral support for her son. Clothes were put on her too (and of course she was surrounded by the shouting crowd as well), and seeing that she was calm would encourage the colt. Just by the way, Jesus probably had to lift His feet to keep them from dragging; it must have been a comical sight. It gives me a warm feeling to see that the Lord Jesus was concerned for the well-being of the colt.

22) Jeremiah?—Matthew 27:9-10

In the NKJV, Matthew 27:9-10 reads like this: “Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, *And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter’s field, as the LORD directed me.*” The difficulty comes when we try to find this material in our canonical Jeremiah. Cross-references send us to Jeremiah 32:6-9, or 18:1-4, or 19:1-3, but upon inspection they must do not match. In Zechariah 11:12-13 we find a general approximation, but it is not precise—and of course Zechariah is not Jeremiah. Evidently there are Hebrew manuscripts that begin the scroll containing the prophets (major and minor) with Jeremiah, and it has been argued that Matthew used ‘Jeremiah’ to refer to the contents of the entire scroll. I suppose that could be a possibility, but I prefer to appeal to Daniel 9:2. “In the first year of his reign [Darius] I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years *specified* by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, . . .” Note that ‘books’ is

plural. Why should any of us assume that men like Jeremiah, or Isaiah, wrote only what is in our canon? (I myself have written a great deal that has never been published.) Daniel clearly wrote 'books', presumably referring to Jeremiah. I conclude that such extra-canonical books were still known in Matthew's day, and that he refers to one of them. I am aware that the distinction cannot be insisted upon, but Matthew did use 'spoken' rather than 'written'.

23) 'Censer', or 'altar of incense'?—Hebrews 9:4

What concerns us here is the Greek word, θυμιατηριον, that occurs only here in the NT. In the LXX the meaning of the word is 'censer', and that is plainly the intended meaning here. But unfortunately modern versions like NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc. render 'altar of incense', thus setting up a contradiction with the Old Testament. [What could have motivated such a perverse proceeding?] According to Exodus 30:6 the altar of incense was placed in front of the curtain leading into the Holy of Holies, and so it was in the Holy Place, not the Holy of Holies. The only reference to this particular censer appears to be in Leviticus 16:12, where it was to be used behind the second curtain to hide the Ark with smoke. Since that censer would only be used once a year (on the day of atonement), it may well have been stored just behind a corner of the second curtain (where the high priest could retrieve it without looking in) and thus the author of Hebrews would be correct in saying that the censer was behind the second curtain, whereas the altar was in front of it. In any event, evidently that censer was **used** only within the Holy of Holies, and so it would be appropriate to say that the area 'had' a golden censer.

24) 'Jesus', or 'Joshua'?—Hebrews 4:8

Beyond question, the Greek Text has 'Jesus', as in the AV, but most modern versions put 'Joshua'. I suppose that 'Jesus' was judged to be an anachronism, and so 'Joshua' was elected to relieve the situation. To be sure, the Septuagint we know uniformly spells 'Joshua' as *Ἰησοῦς* (Jesus) [as a linguist I wonder why the translators transliterated '*lehoshua*' as '*Jesus*'], and probably in consequence, in Acts 7:45 Luke refers to Joshua as '*Jesus*' [it was not his purpose to correct the LXX]. However, looking carefully at the context in Psalm 95:7-11, Joshua just does not fit. Consider: it is presumably Jehovah the Son who is speaking ("Jehovah our Maker", verse 6), and since the reference is to those who fell in the wilderness during the forty years, Joshua cannot be in view. Not only that, I invite attention to Joshua 21:43-45 and 23:1, where the Text says that Joshua did in fact give them rest. So whom are you going to believe? Of course the Text is referring to physical rest, not spiritual, since neither Joshua nor anyone else could be responsible for a people's spiritual rest. Ezekiel chapter 18 is very clear to the effect that each individual is responsible for his own eternal destiny. God has no grandchildren, only sons and daughters. In Mathew 23:8-10 Sovereign Jesus forbids any attempt to dominate someone else's faith or conscience. This is consistent with His statement in John 4:23-24. The worship that the Father wants cannot be forced, imposed, controlled or faked.

In relief of the notion of 'anachronism' I offer the following: 1) in John 12:41 John affirms that Isaiah saw Jesus (it was Jehovah the Son on the throne); 2) in 1 Corinthians 10:4 Paul affirms that the Rock that provided water was Christ; 3) in Hebrews 11:26 the same author [as I believe] has Moses choosing "the reproach of Christ"; 4) in 1 Peter 1:19-20 Peter affirms that

the shed blood of God's Lamb, Jesus, was foreknown before Creation—but blood requires a body, and the Lamb's body was that of Jesus; so Jesus, as Jesus, was known before Creation. Returning to Hebrews 4:8, it was precisely Jesus, Jehovah the Son, who did not allow that generation to enter the 'rest'.

25) How did Judas die?—Matthew 27:5-8 X Acts 1:18-19

In the NKJV, according to Matthew, he “went and hanged himself”, while according to Acts, “falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out”. From the context it is clear that this happened at the field that he purchased, posthumously. For a successful hanging, there must be enough altitude so that when the end of the rope is reached the victim is still in the air. But to fall headlong there has to be a cliff, and you would have to dive off. Putting the two accounts together we may understand that there must have been a tree near the edge of the cliff, with a branch reaching out beyond the edge; Judas tied a cord around that branch and his neck and jumped—either the cord or the branch broke, and the impact was sufficient to split him open. Matthew states that it was actually the chief priests who bought the field, using the money that Judas had thrown on the temple floor; so Judas made the purchase posthumously.

26) 'Saved in childbearing'—1 Timothy 2:15

In the NKJV, 1 Timothy 2:14-15 reads like this: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.” We begin with “she will be saved”; ‘she’ is a pronoun, that stands for a noun, and in the context the reference is clearly to Eve. So how is Eve to be saved? (To render ‘preserved’ is basically meaningless.) Neither Eve nor any other woman is saved by bearing a child. In the Greek Text we find ‘childbirth’, a noun, not a verb. Further, there is a definite article with the noun, so it is ‘the childbirth’. There is only one childbirth that could result in salvation for Eve, and the rest of us, the birth of the Messiah. Of course Eve bore Seth, thus beginning the line that culminated in the Messiah (Genesis 3:15). In the middle of verse 15, and of the sentence, Paul breaks the rules of grammar and switches from ‘she’ to ‘they’—what is true of Eve is applied to all women. Well, strictly speaking, since ‘they’ has no antecedent I suppose it could include men as well, everybody (unless someone wants to argue that women are saved on a different basis than men [which I think would run afoul of other passages]). Still, the paragraph is about women. Any sisters in Christ who have been troubled by this verse, thinking that they must bear a child, may relax on that score.

27) Did Jesus hide?—John 8:59

In the NKJV, John 8:59 reads like this: “Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” My translation reads like this: “Then they picked up stones to throw at Him;¹ but Jesus was concealed and went out of the temple, going through the middle of them; yes, that is how He got away!” The familiar “hid Himself” is not the best rendering here. Jesus did not try to hide behind a pillar, or whatever. He was surrounded by angry Jews with stones in their hands.

¹ Since certain situations demanded a stoning, there were doubtless piles of ammunition placed strategically around the temple premises.

Obviously they would have seen Him and started stoning. He became invisible and simply walked out, passing right through the middle of them. About half a percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality (demonstrably so), omit “going through the middle of them; yes, that is how He got away” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The 99.5% are doubtless correct, and supply an important detail.

28) Did they hear the Voice, or not?—Acts 9:7 X Acts 22:9

In the NKJV, Acts 9:7 reads like this: “And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.” And Acts 22:9 reads like this: “And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of him who spoke to me.” Comparing the two accounts, we seem to have a discrepancy: did they hear the Voice, or didn’t they? Comparing the verses in the Greek Text, we discover that the verb, ‘hear’, and the noun, ‘voice’, are the same in both. Looking more closely, however, we notice that in 9:7 the noun is in the Genitive case, while in 22:9 it is in the Accusative. We have here a subtlety of Greek grammar: in the Genitive ‘voice’ refers to sound, while in the Accusative it refers to meaning, to the words. Saul’s companions heard the Voice, but were not allowed to understand the words—only Saul understood the words. A similar thing happened in John 12:28-29; the people heard the sound (sufficiently impressive that they called it thunder), but only Jesus understood the words.

29) Did the centurion leave his house?—Luke 7:1-10 X Matthew 8:5-13

It has often been supposed that these are parallel accounts of the same incident. To be sure, both involve a centurion, in Capernaum, a sick servant, and the statement of the centurion along with the Lord’s reaction are very similar. But other details simply do not match. Evidently the Romans had an army base in Capernaum, with a centurion as commanding officer, who could be rotated. [Where do you suppose Peter sold most of his fish? And what language did he use?] Looking at the sequence of events in both Matthew and Luke, I would say that the incident recorded by Matthew happened first, and a number of months before the one recorded by Luke. Of course an incident like that would become part of the ‘folklore’ of the base. I assume that the centurions were different, but they certainly knew each other, so the second one knew every detail of the first incident. When his turn came, he used a different strategy to make his appeal (he was asking for a second favor), but then repeated the statement that had impressed Jesus so favorably. So, the first centurion left his house, but the second did not.

30) ‘Gall’, or ‘myrrh’?—Matthew 27:34 X Mark 15:23

In the NKJV, Matthew 27:34^a reads like this: “they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink.” And Mark 15:23^a reads like this: “Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink.” That Mark used a generic term, ‘wine’, for the more precise ‘sour wine’ (or ‘wine vinegar’), need not detain us. But what was the mixture? ‘Gall’ is one thing, an animal substance, and ‘myrrh’ is another, a vegetable substance; it was either one or the other, but which? Was Matthew influenced by Psalm 69:21? “They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” (Matthew wrote for a Jewish audience, and seems to have mentioned fulfilled prophecy whenever he could.) More to the point, perhaps,

is Acts 8:23, where Peter says to Simon (the ex-sorcerer), “for I see that you are in a gall of bitterness” (so the Greek Text). Evidently ‘gall’ was used as a generic term for any bitter substance. I take it that Matthew, perhaps influenced by Psalm 69:21, used the generic term. I conclude that the precise substance used was myrrh, as Mark indicates.

31) How many?—Acts 7:14 X Genesis 46:26 X Genesis 46:27

Again, we need only pay close attention to each context, and the precise wording of the text. The three verses give us three different numbers: 75, 66 and 70, respectively. I will begin with the smallest number, which is in Genesis 46:26: “All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob’s sons’ wives, were sixty-six persons in all.” The crucial datum is ‘from his body’, so who were they? Reuben + four sons = 5, Simeon + six sons = 7, Levi + three sons = 4, Judah + five sons + 6, Issachar + four sons = 5, Zebulun + three sons = 4, that add up to 31, but we must include Dinah to get the total of 32 from Leah. Gad + seven sons = 8, Asher + six sons + 7, but we must add a daughter (mentioned in the record) to get the total of 16 from Zilpah. Joseph + two sons = 3, Benjamin + ten sons = 11, that add up to 14 from Rachel. Dan + one son = 2, Naphtali + four sons = 5, that add up to 7 from Bilhah. The grand total ‘from his body’ is 69. But of course Joseph and his two sons were already in Egypt, so that leaves 66 who ‘went with Jacob to Egypt’. Genesis 46:27 says, “All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.” This includes Joseph and Jacob himself, so there is no discrepancy. But what about Acts 7:14? “Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people.” The 75 presumably refers to ‘all his relatives’, which excludes Jacob and of course Joseph. I take it that nine wives came to Egypt (the wives are mentioned in Genesis 46:26), the other two having died before the migration. (If we include Jacob, there would be eight wives.)

32) Buy a ticket to Heaven?—Luke 16:9

In the NKJV, Luke 16:9 reads like this: “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home [literally, ‘the eternal dwellings’].” Within the context the Lord is clearly using irony, or sarcasm. In the immediately preceding verse the owner’s ‘commendation’ of the stupid steward is obviously sarcastic, since the steward was sacked. And verse 14 below indicates that what Jesus said was for the benefit of the Pharisees, who were greedy. The use of sarcasm is not rare in the Bible. Getting into the eternal dwellings does not depend on ‘buying’ friends down here; it depends on pleasing the Owner up there. And who says someone who can be bought with ‘unrighteous mammon’ is going to Heaven? He would have to get there first in order to ‘receive’ the buyer. The whole ‘scene’ is patently ridiculous. Just by the way, verse 13 declares a terribly important truth. To embrace the world’s value system (humanism, relativism, materialism) is to reject God. Materialistic ‘Christians’ are really serving mammon (‘mammon’ includes more than just money).

33) Buy cleansing? Luke 11:41

In the NKJV, Luke 11:41 reads like this: “But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you.” My translation reads like this: “Nevertheless, give what is possible as alms; then indeed all things are clean to you.” At first glance this statement seems difficult, but because they were filled with greed, for them to give away as much as possible

would represent a major change in their values. Zacchaeus offers a case in point: the Lord Himself declared that he was saved (Luke 19:8-9).

34) Do we command God?—Matthew 18:18

In the NKJV, Matthew 18:18 reads like this: “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” The normal meaning of this translation is that Heaven has to follow our lead (is it not?), and there is no lack of religious communities that teach this. But really now, what possible competence might human beings have to tell God what to do? We may ask, but not command. The difficulty arises from an inaccurate translation. The tense of the Greek verb phrase here is a periphrastic future perfect, passive voice (so also in 16:18). Thus, “will have been bound/loosed” not “will be bound/loosed”. We are not telling God what to do; we are to apply down here that which He has already done in heaven. (What had been just for Peter is now given to all the disciples.)

In John 5:19 the Lord Jesus stated that He could only do what He saw the Father doing. Our inability to see what the Father is doing is probably one of our worst spiritual problems—it condemns us to waste a lot of time and energy trying to do things that we shouldn't. In practical terms, when I 'bind' something and nothing happens, I conclude that it had not been 'bound' in Heaven. I tried to do something that the Father was not doing.

35) 'Size' of faith?—Luke 17:6, Matthew 17:20

In the NKJV, Luke 17:6 reads like this: “If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” Perhaps because of the parables just discussed, I don't remember ever hearing any other interpretation for this than the size of the faith. (The same holds for Matthew 17:20.) But that usually left me disgruntled: surely my faith was bigger than a seed, but I was never able to make a tree or hill obey me! But looking at the Text again, might the intended meaning of 'as a mustard seed' be different? Is not the phrase ambiguous? Could the verb 'has' be implied? Well then, what kind of 'faith' might a mustard seed have? Albeit so small, it reacts without question to the climactic circumstances, and grows to remarkable proportions. If we reacted similarly, without question, to the Holy Spirit's promptings, our spiritual 'climactic circumstances', we should indeed move mountains, literally. Or to put it another way, a seed has the faith to die, like the Lord Jesus said in John 12:24: "unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone". In 1 Corinthians 15:31 Paul said that he died daily. How so? Obviously he didn't die physically; he died to himself, his own ideas and ambitions, so as to embrace God's will. Dying to self is a prerequisite for moving mountains, because then we will only attempt to do what we see the Father doing (John 5:19).

36) 'Staff', or 'bed'?—Hebrews 11:21 X Genesis 47:31

In the NKJV, Hebrews 11:21 reads like this: “By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.” It has been alleged that this statement disagrees with Genesis 47:31, that has Jacob leaning on the head of the bed (following the Massoretic Text), rather than the top of his staff. However, close attention to the contexts indicates that Hebrews 11:21 and Genesis 47:31 refer to different occasions,

so there is no need to imagine a discrepancy. That said, it may be of interest to note the following. The Hebrew words for 'bed' and 'staff' are spelled with the same three consonants, the difference being in the vowels, that were not written. Thus the Original Hebrew Text was ambiguous here. When the Massorettes added vowel pointing to the Hebrew Text, many centuries after Christ, they chose 'bed'. Long before, the Septuagint had chosen 'staff'.

37) The 'smallest' seed?—Mark 4:31-32, Matthew 13:32

In the NKJV, Mark 4:31-32 reads like this: "It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."

The rendering 'the smallest seed in the world/earth' is unfortunate and misleading. The Text has 'of those on the ground', repeating the phrase above it, only eliding the verb. The Lord was not making a global botanical statement, as the next verse makes clear—He was referring to vegetables planted in a garden in His day and in that area, and of such herbs mustard had the smallest seed. To object that tobacco and orchid seeds are smaller is beside the point. My translation reads like this: "It is like a mustard seed, that when it is sown on the ground is the smallest of all such seeds, yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden herbs and produces big branches, so that the birds of the air are able to rest in its shade." The verb I have rendered 'to rest' is a compound form. The noun root refers to a temporary shelter, like a tent or a hut. The verbal form means to make use of such a shelter. Here the preposition *kata* is prefixed to the verb, emphasizing, as I suppose, the temporariness. The Text says that the birds can use the shade, not the branches. But shade moves with the sun, and with the wind—how can you build a nest in something that keeps moving around (the Text actually says 'under its shade')? My comments also serve for Matthew 13:32, except that there the birds are resting in the 'branches', rather than the shade. The verb is the same, and I handle it the same way, 'rest' rather than 'nest', although 'nest' is possible.

38) 'This is', or 'You are'?—Matthew 3:17 X Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22

In the NKJV, Matthew 3:17 reads like this: "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'." And Mark 1:11 reads like this: "Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'." Luke also has "You are". So what did the Voice actually say? In a manner similar to what happened on the Day of Pentecost, I conclude that each hearer received his own interpretation, or message. Matthew records the event from John's perspective: he heard, "This is . . ." Mark and Luke record the event from Jesus' perspective: He heard, "You are . . ." At Pentecost, with over a dozen languages being spoken at once, even if one of them was yours, it would require a personal miracle in your ear to enable you to extract your message from the welter of sound.

39) 'Valley', or 'ravine'?—Luke 3:5

In the NKJV, Luke 3:4-5 reads like this: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; . . .’” Does this mean that the surface of the earth will be flattened out? My translation reads like this: “A voice calling out: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness, make His paths straight. 5 Every ravine will be filled up, and every mountain and hill will be leveled; the crooked parts of the roads will be straightened out, and the rough parts will be smoothed out; . . .’” The reference is to Isaiah 40:3. Hebrew poetry, and prose, makes heavy use of parallel or synonymous statements. From the context in Isaiah it seems clear that “in the wilderness” goes with the verb “make straight”, not “call out”. But why a straight road in the wilderness? Any road facilitates the movement of people and goods, but a straight road through accidented terrain is a major asset, and Jerusalem is surrounded by accidented terrain. I render ‘ravine’ according to the normal meaning of the Greek word here; ‘ravine’ is also one of the normal meanings of the corresponding Hebrew word in Isaiah. Actually, Isaiah 40:3-4 describes the construction of a modern super highway. Verse 5 describes what happens where the highway passes, not all over the place.

40) Who said what?—Matthew 27:48-49 X Mark 15:36 X John 19:29-30 (Luke 23:36)

I take it that the action in John 19:29, as well as Luke 23:36, was carried out by soldiers, and should not be confused with that recorded in Matthew and Mark, although all four refer to offering Jesus sour wine to drink (since Jesus was on the cross for some six hours, there was time for several drinks). The seeming discrepancy I wish to address is in Matthew and Mark. In the NKJV, Matthew 27:48-49 reads like this: “Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, ‘Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him’.” A single man offers the drink, but the rest say, “Let Him alone, . . .” And Mark 15:36 reads like this: “Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, ‘Let Him alone; . . .’” A single man offers the drink, and **he** says, “Let Him alone, . . .” I would not be surprised if the man involved here was John Mark himself. But whoever he was, if he knew Hebrew he knew perfectly well that Jesus was not calling Elijah, so he sarcastically repeats their statement, in disgust. I deny any discrepancy.

41) Peter’s mother-in-law—Matthew 8:14-15 X Mark 1:29-31, Luke 4:38-39

For most of my adult life, I assumed that Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law only once, until one day it occurred to me that some of the details do not match. Consider: although the details of the actual healing are slightly different in the three accounts, they could be harmonized to come out with a single episode; it is the context that differs. Mark and Luke have the same context; the healing they record took place not long after the ministry in Samaria (John chapter four), but certainly before the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ recorded by Matthew. The context for the healing in Matthew is quite different, and happened after that ‘Sermon’. As recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke, I would say that the events occurring between the two healings occupy the following stretches of Text: Matthew 4:23-8:13, Mark 1:32-45 and Luke 4:40-5:15. I see a practical application to this: just because God heals you one time does not mean that you will never get sick again (even with the same problem).

42) Where to place a 'comma'—Acts 12:25

Since Acts was written at least two years after Paul arrived in Rome in chains, it would not have been 'published' until into the 60s. When Jerusalem was destroyed in 70, it disappeared from the Christian map for centuries—the center of gravity of the Church was now Asia Minor. Although Luke himself was no doubt very fluent in Greek, for most Christians in Asia Minor it would be a second language. If this was also true of most people who made copies of NT books (especially in the early decades), and since those books were written without punctuation (or even spaces between words), it was predictable that now and again someone would put a 'comma' in the wrong spot. I imagine that it would have been just such an event that gave rise to the peculiar set of variants that we encounter in Acts 12:25.

Throughout the NT there are numerous places where there is a more or less serious split within Family 35, with two competing readings (usually involving just one letter). But this is the **only** place (yes, only) in the whole NT where the family splinters—there are no fewer than seven variants, five of them being of some consequence.

Instead of "Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch, having fulfilled their mission", someone (or several someones) put the comma after 'returned', resulting in "Barnabas and Saul returned, having fulfilled their mission to Antioch"—but with that punctuation 'Antioch' must be changed to 'Jerusalem'. (Having done that, we have two ways of saying essentially the same thing—if you get the 'comma' right!) Following that hypothesis, that change must have occurred rather early on, and in circumstances that resulted in that change dominating the transmission of Acts down through the years. To see what I mean we need to have the evidence before us:

1) υπεστρεψαν εις αντιοχειαν	(f ³⁵ =27.8%) (5.1%)
2) υπεστρεψαν απο ιερουσαλημ	(f ³⁵ =8.9%) D (10.9%)
3) υπεστρεψαν απο ιερουσαλημ εις αντιοχειαν	(f ³⁵ =12.7%) (7.3%)
4) υπεστρεψαν εξ ιερουσαλημ	(f ³⁵ =1.3%) ⚭ A (3.6%) OC,TR
5) υπεστρεψαν εξ ιερουσαλημ εις αντιοχειαν	(f ³⁵ =11.4%) (12.2%) CP
6) υπεστρεψαν εις ιερουσαλημ	(f ³⁵ =36.7%) B (60%) RP,HF,NU
7) υπεστρεψαν εις ιερουσαλημ εις αντιοχειαν	(f ³⁵ =1.3%) (0.6%) [not a conflation, being nonsense; the copyist was aware of both, and didn't know how to choose]

It is evident that variants 2) - 5) were created deliberately; the copyists were reacting to the meaning of the whole phrase within the context (in this situation it will not do to consider the name of each city in isolation; the accompanying preposition must also be taken into account). But they were reacting to variant 6), not variant 1). However, once they were created, and as they became exemplars, those who made copies would see no problem and simply reproduce what was in front of them [so we may not add the percentages for 2) - 6) and say that Jerusalem has over 90% of the vote]. Having myself collated at least one book in over 70 MSS (and over ten entire MSS), I have observed repeatedly that the copyist faithfully reproduced a nonsensical reading—either they weren't paying attention, or their respect for the Text was such that they did not venture to change it (or in later years the monks may have been instructed to not make changes, precisely to preserve the variety of readings that

had come down to them [their superiors may not have felt that they had the competence to choose one form to the exclusion of others]—so the 60% does not mean that all those copyists agreed with what they copied, or even that they understood it.

Since the normal meaning of the syntax here is the first one (they returned to Antioch), and since both the Holy Spirit and Luke knew how to write good Greek (Koine), my presuppositions lead me to choose it. But it is not only my presuppositions; consider:

- a) Acts 11:30, ο και εποησαν αποστειλαντες, "which they also did, having sent . . . by B. & S." An aorist participle is prior in time to its main verb, in this case also aorist—their purpose is stated to have been realized. The author clearly implies that the offering did arrive, or had arrived, in Judea/Jerusalem. [In Acts the author seems almost to use "Jerusalem" and "Judea" inter-changeably, perhaps to avoid repetition. E.g.: 11:1 Judea, 11:2 Jerusalem (were the apostles not in Jerusalem, or immediate environs?); 11:27 Jerusalem, 11:29 Judea, 11:30 the elders (would not the ruling elders be in Jerusalem?); 12:1-19 took place in Jerusalem, but v. 19 says Herod went down from Judea to Caesarea; 15:1 Judea, 15:2 Jerusalem; 28:21 letters from "Judea" probably means Jerusalem.] Note that the next verse (12:1) places us in Jerusalem.
- b) Acts 12:25 (12:1-24 is unrelated, except that verses 1-19 take place in Jerusalem), βαρναβας και σαυλος—the action includes **both**.
- c) Acts 12:25, υπεστρεψαν . . . πληρωσαντες την διακονιαν, "they returned . . . having fulfilled the mission". Again, both the participle and the main verb are aorist, and both plural. "Having fulfilled the mission" defines the main verb. Since the mission was to Judea, which of necessity includes Jerusalem as its capital city, the 'returning' must be to the place where the mission originated.
- d) Acts 12:25, "also taking with them John, the one called Mark"—we have no record that John Mark had ever been in Antioch before this, so how could he return to Jerusalem if he was already there? Acts 13:13 raises the same question.

Barnabas could be viewed as returning to Jerusalem, having completed his mission to Antioch, but this could not be said of Saul. I conclude that 'to Jerusalem' cannot be correct here even though attested by 60% of the MSS. We observe that the other 40% of the MSS, plus the three ancient versions, are agreed that the motion was away from Jerusalem, not toward it. It seems to me that there is only one way to 'save' the majority variant here: place a comma between υπεστρεψαν and εις, thereby making 'to Jerusalem' modify 'the ministry'. (This was my opening hypothesis.) But such a construction is unnatural to the point of being unacceptable—had that been the author's purpose we should expect την εις ιερουσαλημ διακονιαν ογ την διακονιαν εις ιερουσαλημ (assuming that both the Holy Spirit and Luke were good at Greek). The other sixteen times that Luke uses υποστρεφω εις we find the normal, expected meaning, 'return to'. As a linguist (PhD) I would say that the norms of language require us to use the same meaning in Acts 12:25. Which to my mind leaves εις αντιοχειαν as the only viable candidate for the Original reading in this place. (Which, however, would not prevent copyists who were not native speakers of Greek from putting the 'comma' in the wrong spot.)

The whole contour of the evidence is troubling, strange, and as I have already observed, it is absolutely the only place in the whole NT where Family 35 splinters. Variants 1) through 5) are all votes against 6), but we must choose one of them to stand against 6)—the clear choice is 1). "To Jerusalem" has 'Number', 'Antiquity' and 'Continuity'. "To Antioch" has

'Antiquity', 'Variety', 'Continuity' and 'Reasonableness'. As Burgon would say, this is one of those places where 'Reasonableness' just cannot be ignored. I believe he would agree that his 'notes of truth' give the nod to Antioch.