

UNIT 3: THE RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE – PART 2

LESSON 2 – Keeping Up with the Inconsistencies



Introduction

- What we want to learn:
 - Inconsistencies and apparent contradictions in Scripture are nothing to be threatened by
 - These questions often bring us closer to God by inspiring us to look deeper into Scripture



Introduction

- What we want to do with what we learn:
 - To understand and enjoy God's Word while comfortably examining the apparent contradictions



Scripture Focus

- Matthew 27:54
- Mark 16:1-8
- Luke 19-23
- John 20:1-18



Opening Prayer

Lord, I am asking you to give me eyes to see Your Word, a mind that understands Your Word, and a heart that embraces Your Word. Without Your help, I am lost. Thank You for loving me and teaching me through Your Word. Amen.



Anchor Statement

The Bible is the Word of God, and it is without error. When we study the inconsistencies and apparent contradictions, we see that the truth of Scripture for our lives is not tarnished but enhanced.



OVERVIEW



Overview

- People say that perceived errors and potential inconsistencies are evidence that Scripture is unreliable. We'll address some common contradictions with boldness.



Context and Details

Matthew

Author: Matthew, former tax collector and disciple of Jesus

Time frame: late 50s or 60s AD

Purpose: to convince a primarily Jewish audience that Jesus is the Messiah



Context and Details

Mark

Author: Mark (from Peter's firsthand account)

Time frame: mid 50s AD

Purpose: written to a non-Jewish audience, explaining Jewish customs in an effort for them to see the big picture



Context and Details

Luke

Author: Luke, a doctor; a Gentile

Time frame: ~60 AD

Purpose: to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man



Context and Details

John

Author: John the Apostle

Time frame: ~85-95 AD

Purpose: to clearly communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah



THE SETTING



The Setting

- The gospel accounts are each a perspective on the person of Jesus – His life, His message, His ministry.
- While they are telling the same story, each come from a unique perspective for a unique purpose



THE MAIN POINT



The Main Point

- The most common challenge to the Bible is that there are several accounts that appear to differ as they tell historic events.



THE LEAD IN



Goal

To appreciate the unique perspectives each Gospel offers and to understand why having multiple accounts enhances our understanding of Jesus



Exercise

- **The four Gospels**



Question

- Can you think of a reason that knowing the audience might be important to how something is written?



Primary Audiences

- Matthew
 - Jews in practice and theology
- Mark
 - Non-Jews experiencing persecution
- Luke
 - Gentile Christians
- John
 - Christians from both backgrounds



Matthew

- Highlights how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies
- Presents Him as the Messiah
- Includes teachings like Sermon on the mount



Mark

- Jesus as a man of action and authority
- Shortest gospel moving quickly from one event to another
- Emphasizes Jesus' miracles



Luke

- Emphasizes Jesus' humanity and compassion, especially the marginalized like women and poor
- Longest gospel with meticulous detail
- Highlights Jesus' teachings



John

- Focuses on Jesus' divine nature – Word of God and Light of the World
- Deep, reflective teachings like discussions with:
 - Nicodemus
 - Samaritan woman at the well



THE MAIN EVENT



Goal

- To help us wrestle with apparent contradictions
- To learn to see variations help us to fully understand the story



Contradiction

- Arises from differences in perspective, wording, or emphasis between different passages
- Can arise between two truthful accounts



Question

- Why do you think we are using the four gospels to talk about apparent contradictions in Scripture?
 - With four perspectives, there are bound to be differences among the accounts



Perceived Contradictions

- May be reconciled through careful study considering things like the literary and cultural context, as well as theological themes



First Apparent Contradiction

- Mark 16:1-8
- John 20:1-18



Question

- What differences do you see between these two accounts?
 - While they may seem contradictory, they are complementary details that improve our understanding of this miraculous event



Discussing Biblical Contradictions

- Approach the conversation with humility, acknowledging that our understanding is limited and always growing
- Not one of the Gospel writers were present at the tomb when the women saw Jesus



Question

- Do you think that these apparent contradictions in the resurrection account can exist in harmony?

How?

- Our trust in the Bible doesn't come from its absence of apparent contradictions



Thoughts

- Our trust in the Bible doesn't come from its absence of apparent contradictions but on its overall coherence, historical reliability, and transformative power



Second Apparent Contradiction

- Luke 23:47
- Matthew 27:54



Question

- Other than Matthew's inclusion of another earthquake, what main contradiction do you see in these verses?



Question

- How do the centurion's words change what we get from these verses?
 - Consider that Matthew's account is a profession of Jesus' divinity



Thoughts

- While contradictions imply direct opposition between statements or accounts, inconsistencies might involve something more like a variation or a difference that can be reconciled with more study



Thoughts

- It's important for us to navigate and talk about inconsistencies and apparent contradictions in Scripture because we proclaim the Bible as inerrant or without error.



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THE LAST WORD



Goal

- To practice studying Scripture in a way that helps us remain anchored in faith



Luke 22:35-38

- Based on this passage alone, does it appear that Jesus is encouraging violence by telling His followers to see what they have and buy a sword?



Follow Up Questions

- Does violence seem in line with Jesus' character?
- Should all followers purchase a literal sword?
- Should Christians purchase a weapon from money made selling their backpacks?



Question

- What does Jesus mean when He says, “Scripture must be fulfilled because of Me?”



Luke 19:28-40

- In this passage he was very clear with His followers
- In the Luke 22 passage, He's making a completely different point



Thoughts

- This passage is not a contradiction of Jesus' character, but rather something that was meant to display the disciples' lack of faith in Him



Thoughts

- Apparent contradictions are not always indicators of error
- When you trust that the Bible is reliable, even when it's confusing, you can learn a lot more by chasing the answers to the questions raised



