

# The Objective Authority of the Sacred Text

## Introduction

If the Sovereign Creator exists, and if He has addressed a written revelation to our race, then nothing is more important for us than to know what He said (with a view to obeying it, if we are smart). This because such a revelation will have objective authority over us (although the Creator gives us the option of rejecting that authority [but due regard should be given to the consequences]). The enemy has always understood this better than most of us, and began his attacks early on—“Yea, hath God said, . . .?” (Genesis 3:1). Of course many books have been written, pro and con, and I will here content myself with declaring these as presuppositions that I bring to my task: the Sovereign Creator exists, and He has addressed a written revelation to our race.

The discipline of textual criticism (of whatever text) is predicated on the assumption/allegation/declaration that there is a legitimate doubt about the precise original wording of a text. No one does textual criticism on the 1611 King James Bible since copies of the original printing still exist. With reference to New Testament textual criticism, the crucial point at issue is the preservation of its Text. For any text to have objective authority, we have to know what it is.

It is often assumed by the ignorant and uninformed—even on a university campus—that textual criticism of the New Testament is supported by a superstitious faith in the Bible as a book dictated in miraculous fashion by God. That is not true. Textual criticism has never existed for those whose New Testament is one of miracle, mystery, and authority. A New Testament created under those auspices would have been handed down under them and would have no need of textual criticism.<sup>1</sup>

Thus wrote Colwell in 1952. In 1948 he was even more antagonistic.<sup>2</sup> In simple terms his argument went like this: If God had inspired the New Testament text, He would have preserved it; He did not preserve it, so therefore He did not inspire it. I tend to agree with his logical inference [if his facts were correct], only I propose to turn the tables: It is demonstrable that God preserved the New Testament Text, so therefore He must have inspired it! I consider that the preservation of the N.T. Text is a strong argument for its inspiration, and since it is inspiration that gives it its authority, the two doctrines go hand in hand.<sup>3</sup> Of course my use of the term ‘demonstrable’ is the red flag here; anyone who has not read my recent work could argue that I am begging the question.

Objective authority depends on verifiable meaning; if a reader/hearer can give any meaning he chooses to a message, any authority it ends up having for him will be relative and subjective (the ‘neo-orthodox’ approach). As a linguist (PhD) I affirm that the fundamental principle of communication is this: both the speaker/writer and the hearer/reader must respect the norms of language, in particular those of the specific code being used. If the encoder violates the rules, he will be deceiving the decoder (deliberately, if he knows what he’s doing). If the decoder violates the rules, he will misrepresent the encoder (deliberately, if he knows what he’s doing). In either event communication is damaged; the extent of the damage will depend on the circumstances.

Several times the Lord Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of the Truth”, and Titus 1:2 affirms that God cannot lie—it is one thing He can’t do, being contrary to His essence; “He cannot deny Himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). It should be obvious to one and all that the Sovereign will not take kindly to being called a liar. To interpret the Sacred Text in a way that is not faithful to the rules of Hebrew and Greek, respectively, is to ascribe to the Author the intention of deceiving us, is to call Him a liar—not smart. But to interpret the Text, we must have it, so I return to the subject of preservation. I invite attention to the following evidence, in relief of the term ‘demonstrable’.

## The Divine Preservation of the Original Wording of the General Epistles

As a point of departure for this discussion I will use a definition of ‘preservation’ written by Bart D. Ehrman:

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<sup>1</sup> E.C. Colwell, *What is the Best New Testament?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Colwell, “Biblical Criticism: Lower and Higher”, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXVII (1948), 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> I consider also that the preservation of the NT Text is a strong argument for its canonicity. Why did God preserve only the 27 books that form that canon, no more, no less, no others?

Any claim that God preserved the text of the New Testament intact, giving His church actual, not theoretical, possession of it, must [emphasis added] mean one of three things—either 1) God preserved it in all the extant manuscripts so that none of them contain any textual corruptions, or 2) He preserved it in a group of manuscripts, none of which contain any corruptions, or 3) He preserved it in a solitary manuscript which alone contains no corruptions.<sup>1</sup>

He limits the concept of preservation in a way that verges on the creation of a straw man, but his definition serves my present purpose very nicely. It is obvious that option 1) cannot stand, but what of 2) and 3)? As the title indicates, this section is limited to the General Epistles; this group of seven books is one of the sections into which scribes divided the New Testament for the purpose of making copies.<sup>2</sup> Since of Ehrman's three options the third would appear to be the easiest to meet, if we can, I will begin with it.<sup>3</sup>

We must first define the scope—are we looking for a manuscript that is perfect for a whole book,<sup>4</sup> a whole section, or the whole New Testament? I think it is reasonably clear that the correct answer is a whole book; after all, that is how the New Testament was written; it follows that the very first copies were made book by book (and all subsequent copies are dependent upon them). So far as I know, no one claims divine inspiration for the division into sections—over the centuries of copying this became an accepted response to the constraints of materials and time. However, since most of the extant copies reflect that division, it will be interesting to see if we can find a manuscript that is perfect for a whole section. The formal recognition of the complete canon of the New Testament did not take place until the end of the fourth century, although informally it was known in the second (and many hundreds, if not thousands, of copies were in existence by that time—in fact, the main lines of transmission had been established long since), but the question there was the precise roster of books to be included, not the precise wording of the several books. Although many of us believe that God certainly superintended that choice of books, the wording was not at issue. So, we are looking for manuscripts that are perfect for a whole book.

We must next define the text—precisely what profile are we looking for; how can we know if a MS is 'perfect'? This question lands us squarely in the snake pit of NT textual criticism [and most of the snakes are poisonous]. What I think on that subject began to appear in print in 1977<sup>5</sup> and I will not repeat here what is available elsewhere. As a tactical withdrawal I will retreat to an easier question (but I will return to the main one): How can we know if a MS is a perfect representative of its text-type, that is, of its family archetype? To gain time I will illustrate the theory with a concrete example. I invite attention to the chart that follows:

### Performance of f<sup>35</sup> MSS in Individual Books for the General Epistles<sup>6</sup>

- Key: s = singular reading (until all MSS have been collated, this is just an assumption);  
 c = corrected variant (variation of any kind corrected to the presumed archetype);  
 x = uncorrected variant ('variant' here means that it is attested by MSS outside the family);  
 / = family is divided (a splinter group);  
 h = an obvious case of homoioteleuton (or -arcton), involving a line or more;  
 i = sheer inattention (usually repeating a syllable from one line to the next);  
 --- = no departures from the presumed profile.

MS	James	1 Peter	2 Peter	1 John	2 John	3 John	Jude	DATE	LOCATION	Corpus exemplar
<sup>1</sup> "New Testament Textual Criticism: Search for Method", M.Div. thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1981, p. 40—from a copy he sent to me personally. <sup>2</sup> There are comparatively few MSS (about 60) of the complete New Testament (and about 150 more that have all but Revelation); because of the bulk (and the physical and financial difficulty of gathering enough leather) the four Gospels were copied as a unit, and so for the letters of Paul (including Hebrews) and the General Epistles. Acts was usually joined to the Generals, but not always, and there are many MSS (over 300) that join Acts, Paul and the Generals. Revelation was added here and there. <sup>3</sup> At first glance, but when properly redefined the second may be easier. <sup>4</sup> Since the Autographs did not contain chapter or verse divisions, or even division between words, anything less than a whole book will not be convincing. <sup>5</sup> <i>The Identity of the New Testament Text</i> (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1977)—but now please see the present edition, of which this appendix is a part. <sup>6</sup> I collated all the manuscripts myself.										

18	---	1x,2/	1s	1x,2/	---	1s	---	1364	Constantinople	2x,4/
35	2c	2c	---	2c	---	---	2c	XI	Aegean	---
141	1/,2s	1x,4/,2s	1c,1s	1/,3s,2h	---	---	---	XIII	Vatican	1x,6/
149	1x,5/,1c,7s	1x,8/,3s	5/,2s	4/,1c,3s	---	1/	1/,1c	XV	Vatican	2x,24/
201	5/,1s	7/	3/	2/	---	1/	1/	1357	London	19/
204	1x	1/	2/,2s	---	---	---	---	XIII	Bologna	1x,3/
328	1x,5/,2s	5/,4s	1x,2/,1s	2x,4/,1c,1s	---	---	1x,1s	XIII	Leiden	5x,16/
386	2/	1/,1s	1/,2s	3/,3s,1h	---	---	---	XIV	Vatican	7/
394	2/	4/,1c,1i	4/	4/,1s	---	1i	---	1330	Rome	14/
432	5/,3s,1h	10/,6s	1x,2/,1c,1s	1x5/1c1s1h	2s	1/	3s	XV	Vatican	2x,23/
604	6/,1s	1x,11/,1s	4/,1c,1s	7/,1s	1x	1/	---	XIV	Paris	2x,29/
664 <sup>1</sup>	4x,5/,21s	5x9/1c25s	4/,1c,14s	6x6/14s1h	1x,1s	3s	3s	XV	Zittau	16x,24/
757	1x	3/,1c,1s	1x,1s	1/	2s	---	---	XIII	Athens	2x,4/
824	1x,2s	1s	1s	---	---	---	---	XIV	Grottaferrata	1x
928	2/	3/	3/	1/,1c	---	---	---	1304	Dionysiu	9/
986 <sup>2</sup>	4/,2s,1i	6/,4s	1/,1s	3/,3s	1s	---	1s,1i	XIV	Esphigmenu	14/
1072	2/,1h,1i	3/,2c,1s	1s	1/,1c	---	---	---	XIII	M Lavras	6/
1075	1/,1s	7/,2s	1s	1/	---	---	---	XIV	M Lavras	9/
1100	2x,1s	1/,1i	1/	---	---	---	---	1376	Dionysiu	2x,2/
1248	1x2/2c2s2h	1x5/2c3s1h	2x,1/,7s	4s,2h	2/	1/,2s,1h	2s,2h	XIV	Sinai	4x,11/
1249	3/	1x,5/,2s	4/	1x,3/	1/,1c	---	1/	1324	Sinai	2x,17/
1503	1s	3/,1c	1s	1s	1s	---	---	1317	M Lavras	3/
1548	2/,2s	1x,6/,1c,2s	1/,2s	1/,1s	---	---	1s	1359	Vatopediu	1x,10/
1637	1/,1s	4/,1c,1s	1/	1c	---	---	---	1328	M Lavras	6/
1725	2/	1/,1c	---	1s,1i	---	---	1s	1367	Vatopediu	3/
1732	2s	1/,2s	1/,1i	2s	1h	---	1s,1i	1384	M Lavras	2/
1754 <sup>3</sup>	2/,16s	3/,8s	2/,9s	2x1/13s3h	1s	1/,1s	2s	XII	Panteleimonos	2x,9/
1761	2x,2s	2x,4/,3s	1/	1/,1s,1h	1s	2s	---	XIV	Athens	4x,6/
1768	7/,2c,1s	12/,1i	6/,2i	2c	---	1/	1s	1516	Ivion	26/
1855	1/,1s	1x,2/	2/	1/,1c	---	---	---	XIII	Ivion	1x,6/
1864	---	3/,2c	---	1c,2s	---	---	---	XIII	Stavronikita	3/
1865	1s	---	2s	1c	---	1/	---	XIII	Philotheu	1/
1876	1x,4/,3s	2x,4/,3s,1h	4/,1s	1x,3/,1c,2s	2/,1s	1/	1/,2s	XV	Sinai	4x,19/
1892	1x,4/,2c,1s	3x,4/,4s	1x,2/,1c	1/,1c,2s	1x	---	1c,1s	XIV	Jerusalem	6x,11/

MS	James	1 Peter	2 Peter	1 John	2 John	3 John	Jude	DATE	LOCATION	Corpus exemplar
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<sup>1</sup> For all its wildness, 664 has all the diagnostic <sup>95</sup> readings, and thus is clearly a family member (albeit sloppy and promiscuous).

<sup>2</sup> 986 is lacking 1 Peter 1:23 - 2:15.

<sup>3</sup> MS 1754 is second only to 664 in sloppiness, but is clearly a family member.

1897	2/,3s	1/,3s	2s	2s	---	---	1/	XII	Jerusalem	4/
2221	1s	2x	1x,3/,1s	1x,1/	---	---	---	1432	Sparta	4x,4/
2352	1/,1c,1i	6/,1c,1s,1i	3/,1c	2/,1c	1c,1i	---	---	XIV	Meteora	12/
2431	4/,4s,1i	11/,2s,2i	2/,1c,2s,2i	2/,2s,2i	---	---	1i	1332	Kavsokalyvia	19/
2466	1/,1s	1x,1/,1c,4s	1x,2s	3/,1s	---	1/	2s	1329	Patmos	2x,6/
2554	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	1434	Bucharest	---
2587	2/	3/	3/	1/	---	---	1c	XI	Vatican	9/
2626	1/,1s	1x,5/	1/,1s	2/	1/	1/,1s	2/	XIV	Ochrida	1x,13/
2723	---	---	---	1h	---	---	---	XI	Trikala	---

## Interpretation

Now then, the text-type that I call Family 35 ( $\mathfrak{f}^{35}$ ) is represented by some 84 MSS (extant) in the General Epistles. This sample of forty-three family members is certainly representative of the whole text-type, being fully half of its representatives, and taking into consideration the geographic distribution as well. The question immediately before us is: How can we know if a MS is a perfect representative of its text-type? The answer must obtain for a whole book.

The first book in the section is James. Looking at the chart we observe that cursives 18, 1864, 2554 and 2723 are presumed to be perfect representatives, as they stand—they have no deviations from the presumed archetypal profile.<sup>1</sup> Since 35 has been systematically corrected, its exemplar was also perfect. If we ascribe singular readings to the copyist, then the exemplars of 1503, 1732, 1865 and 2221 were perfect as well. If 18, 1864, 2554 and 2723 are copies, not original creations, then their exemplars were also perfect; and the exemplars of the exemplars were also perfect, and so on. The implications of finding a perfect representative of any archetypal text are rather powerful. All the ‘canons’ of textual criticism become irrelevant to any point subsequent to the creation of that text (they could still come into play when studying the creation of the text, in the event). Of the other MSS, 204 and 757 have only one deviation; 386, 394, 928, 1075, 1637, 1725, 1732, 1855, 2466 and 2587 have only two; and so on. (MS 664 has thirty, most of them being careless mistakes; 664 attests the basic profile [the diagnostic variants that distinguish it from all other profiles] and is thus clearly a member of the family, albeit sloppy.)

I have referred to ‘the presumed archetypal profile’. So how did I identify it? I did so on the basis of a fundamental principle. If we have a family made up of 50 MSS, wherever they are all in agreement there can be no question as to the family reading. Where a single MS goes astray against all the rest, there still can be no question—which is what I argue for James above. Wherever so many as two agree (against the rest) then we have a splinter group—off hand I would say that anything up to 20% of the family total would remain a splinter group, with virtually no chance of representing the archetypal reading (if the other 80% are unanimous). Where the attestation falls below 80%, the more so if there are several competing variants, other considerations must come into play.

Returning to James, I claim that we have reasonable certainty as to the precise family profile for that book.<sup>2</sup> That being so, we can now evaluate the individual MSS. That is why I affirm that the exemplars of 18, 35, 1503, 1732, 1864, 1865, 2221, 2554 and 2723 are perfect representatives of the family. To have nine perfect exemplars out of forty-three is probably more than most of us would expect! So in James we have several MSS that meet Ehrman’s option 3), with reference to the archetypal text.

But what about Ehrman’s second option? When he speaks of a ‘group’ of MSS, as distinct from a ‘solitary’ MS (option 3), he presumably is thinking of a family, since they would all have the same profile, of necessity. But if he is thinking of a family, then I submit that option 2) needs to be restated.

<sup>1</sup> Before I collated cursive 18 for myself, I was limited to the collation reflected in *TuT (Text und Textwert der Griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments)* [Ed. Kurt Aland, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987], volumes 9 and 11), which evidently assigns two errors to the copyist; I am satisfied that there are none.

<sup>2</sup> There are only two significant family splits in James, that I discuss in my paper, “ $\mathfrak{f}^{35}$  sub-groups in the General Epistles”.

I suggest: “He preserved it in a family of manuscripts whose archetypal text contains no corruptions —provided that its precise profile can be affirmed beyond reasonable doubt.” (Recall that we are speaking of actual possession of the profile.) The obvious mistakes in individual representatives can cheerfully be factored out, leaving the witness of the family unscathed. As restated, Ehrman’s second option is met by **f<sup>35</sup>** in James, with reference to the archetypal text. Let’s move on to 1 Peter.

Looking at the chart, cursives 1865, 2554 and 2723 are perfect representatives of the presumed archetypal profile, but since 35 has been systematically corrected, its exemplar was also perfect.<sup>1</sup> If we ascribe singular readings to the copyist, then the exemplar of 824 was perfect as well. Of the other MSS, 204 has only one deviation; 386, 1100, 1725 and 2221 have only two; and so on. Arguing as I did for James, in 1 Peter we have five exemplars that meet Ehrman’s option 3) and again **f<sup>35</sup>** meets his option 2), with reference to the archetypal text. Let’s move on to 2 Peter.

Looking at the chart, cursives 35, 1725, 1864, 2554 and 2723 are perfect representatives of the presumed archetypal profile.<sup>2</sup> If we ascribe singular readings to the copyist, then the exemplars of 18, 824, 1072, 1075, 1503, 1865 and 1897 were perfect as well. Of the other MSS, 1100, 1637 and 1761 have only one deviation; 141, 757, 986, 1732, 1855 and 2626 have only two; and so on. Arguing as I did for James, in 2 Peter we have twelve exemplars that meet Ehrman’s option 3) and again **f<sup>35</sup>** meets his option 2), with reference to the archetypal text. Let’s move on to 1 John.

Looking at the chart, cursives 204, 824, 1100 and 2554 are perfect representatives of the presumed archetypal profile, but since 35, 1637, 1768 and 1865 have been systematically corrected, their exemplars were also perfect.<sup>3</sup> The single variation in 2723 is the omission of a whole line in an obvious case of homoioteleuton, which to my mind does not constitute a proper variant reading. In any case its exemplar would be perfect. If we ascribe singular readings to the copyist, then the exemplars of 1503, 1725, 1732 and 1897 were perfect as well. Of the other MSS, 757, 1075 and 2587 have only one deviation; 201, 928, 1072, 1548, 1855, 2221 and 2626 have only two; and so on. Arguing as I did for James, in 1 John we have thirteen exemplars that meet Ehrman’s option 3) and again **f<sup>35</sup>** meets his option 2), with reference to the archetypal text. Let’s move on to 2 John.

Looking at the chart, most of the cursives are perfect representatives of the presumed archetypal profile. Arguing as I did for James, in 2 John we have thirty-six exemplars that meet Ehrman’s option 3) and again **f<sup>35</sup>** meets his option 2), with reference to the archetypal text. Let’s move on to 3 John.

Looking at the chart, most of the cursives are perfect representatives of the presumed archetypal profile. Arguing as I did for James, in 3 John we have thirty-two exemplars that meet Ehrman’s option 3) and again **f<sup>35</sup>** meets his option 2), with reference to the archetypal text. Let’s move on to Jude.

Looking at the chart, half of the cursives are perfect representatives of the presumed archetypal profile. Arguing as I did for James, in Jude we have thirty-six exemplars that meet Ehrman’s option 3) and again **f<sup>35</sup>** meets his option 2), with reference to the archetypal text.

## **But is the archetypal text of **f<sup>35</sup>** the Autograph?**

As they used to say in another world, long departed, “That’s the \$64 question”. In Chapter 7 I presented objective evidence in support of the claim that the text of **f<sup>35</sup>** is ancient and independent of all other lines of transmission. If **f<sup>35</sup>** is independent of all other lines of transmission then it must hark back to the Autographs. What other reasonable explanation is there? If anyone has a different explanation that accounts for the evidence better than (or as well as) mine does, I would like to see it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There are eight significant family splits in 1 Peter, that I discuss in my paper, “**f<sup>35</sup>** sub-groups in the General Epistles”.

<sup>2</sup> There are two significant family splits in 2 Peter, that I discuss in my paper, “**f<sup>35</sup>** sub-groups in the General Epistles”.

<sup>3</sup> There are two significant family splits in 1 John, that I discuss in my paper, “**f<sup>35</sup>** sub-groups in the General Epistles”.

<sup>4</sup> Should anyone wish to claim that **f<sup>35</sup>** is a recension, I request (and insist) that he specify who did it, when and where, and furnish evidence in support of the claim. Without evidence any such claim is frivolous and irresponsible—Hort’s claim that his ‘Syrian’ text was the result of a ‘Lucianic’ recension is a classic example (Burgon protested at the complete lack of evidence, at the time, and no one has come up with any since). I remind the reader that evidence must be rigorously distinguished from presupposition and interpretation.

I claim to have demonstrated the superiority of Family 35 based on size, independence, age, distribution, profile and care. I challenge any and all to do the same for any other line of transmission!

So then, if the archetypal text of f<sup>35</sup> is the Autograph then we have met two of Ehrman's three options for each of the seven General Epistles. I maintain that in this year of our Lord we have actual (not theoretical) possession of the precise original wording of James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and Jude!! Furthermore, I am prepared to offer the same sort of demonstration for each of the 27 books that make up our NT. In consequence thereof, I maintain that in this year of our Lord we have actual (not theoretical) possession of the precise original wording of the whole New Testament!!!

I have argued above that preservation is to be demonstrated book by book, but wouldn't it be interesting if we could do the same for a whole section? But of course we have—Ehrman's option 2), as restated, obtains for the whole section of seven books. Not just interesting but astonishing it would be to find a single MS that is perfect throughout a section of seven books!<sup>1</sup> And again we have!! 2554 fills the bill, as do the exemplars of 35 and 2723, and as does 2723 itself, virtually. So recently as ten years ago I would not have dreamed of such a thing.

If God demonstrably preserved the precise wording of a text throughout two millennia, this implies rather strongly that He inspired it in the first place—otherwise, why bother with it? And if He went to such pains, I rather suspect that He expects us to pay strict attention to it. When we stand before the Just Judge—who is also Creator, Savior and Inspirer—He will require an accounting based on the objective authority of that Text.

## Some Possible Discrepancies

Not only does the objective authority of Scripture depend upon verifiable meaning, it depends in the first place on divine inspiration. Anything inspired by God should not contain errors, so enemies of an inspired Bible are quick to point out any errors of fact or internal contradictions that they can. Unfortunately, the Hortian theory made it easy for them, since it foists such errors and contradictions upon the NT Text. In Appendix F I discuss some of them in detail (which please see), but I will here include a bare list of the obvious ones I have noticed so far.

### 'Poison' inserted in the 'Bread of Life' by the Hortian theory

When the percentages do not add up to 100, there are other variants that are not mentioned. Numbers within ( ) are more or less exact; those within [ ] are approximations—the percentages refer to the total of extant MSS. For a full statement of the evidence, please see my Greek Text.

John 6:47—*ο πιστευων* the one believing (0,5%) X *ο πιστευων εις εμε* the one believing into me (99,5%)

John 7:8—*ουκ* not [3%] X *ουπω* not yet [96,5%]

Luke 4:44 (Mark 1:39, Matthew 4:23)—*Ιουδαιας* of Judea (4,1%) X *Γαλιλαιας* of Galilee (94,7%)

John 1:18—*μονογενης θεος* an only begotten god (0,3%) || *ο μονογενης θεος* the only begotten god (0,1%) X *ο μονογενης υιος* the only begotten son (99,6%)

1 Timothy 3:16—*ος* who (1%) X *θεος* God (98,5%)

Mark 16:9-20—absent (0,2%) X present (99,8%)

John 7:53-8:11—absent (15%) X present (85%)

Luke 3:33—*του Αδμιν του Αρνι* of Admin, of Arni [0.00%] (it is a 'patchwork quilt' put together on the basis of at least ten variants) X *του Αραμ* of Aram [95%]

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<sup>1</sup> This would be true for the archetypal text of any group of 70-80 MSS, or even fewer. If the archetype is the Autograph, all the more so.

- Matthew 19:17 (X Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19)—*τι με ερωτας περι του αγαθου* Why do you ask me concerning the good? (0,9%) X *τι με λεγεις αγαθον* Why do you call me good? (99%)
- Luke 23:45—*εκλιποντος* being eclipsed (0,8%) X *εσκοτισθη* was darkened (97,5%)
- Mark 6:22 (Matthew 14:6)—*αυτου . . . Ηρωδιαδος* his [daughter] Herodias (1,3%) X *αυτης της Ηρωδιαδος* Herodias' own [daughter] (97,2%)
- John 6:11 (Matthew 14:19, Mark 6:41, Luke 9:16)—omission [3%] X *τοις μαθηταις οι δε μαθηται* to the disciples and the disciples [97%]
- Acts 19:16—*αμφοτερων* both [5%] X *αυτων* them [90%]
- Matthew 1:7,10—*Ασαφ, Αμος* Asaph, Amos [2%] X *Ασα, Αμον* Asa, Amon [98%]
- Matthew 5:22 (see Ephesians 4:26, Psalm 4:4)—omission (1,9%) X *εικη* without cause (96,2%)
- 1 Corinthians 5:1—*ουδε εν τοις εθνεσιν* does not exist even among the Gentiles (3,2%) X *ουδε εν τοις εθνεσιν ονομαζεται* is not named even among the Gentiles (96,8%)
- John 18:24—*απεστειλεν ουν* then he sent [9%] X *απεστειλεν* he had sent [90%]
- Matthew 10:10 (Mark 6:8)—*μηδε ραβδον* neither a staff [5%] X *μηδε ραβδους* neither staves [95%]
- Mark 1:2 (see Malachi 3:1, Isaiah 40:3)—*τω Ισαια τω προφητη* in Isaiah the prophet (3,1%) X *τοις προφηταις* in the prophets (96,7%)
- Acts 28:13—*περιελοντες* removing [something] [5%] X *περιελθοντες* tacking back and forth [95%]
- 2 Peter 3:10—*ευρεθησεται* will be found (3,2%) X *κατακαησεται* will be burned up (93,6%)
- Jude 15—*πασαν ψυχην* every soul (0,5%) X *παντας τους ασεβεις* all the wicked (97,8%)
- Luke 9:10(12)—*πολιν καλουμενην Βηθσαιδα* a town named Bethsaida [0,5%] X *τοπον ερημον πολεως καλουμενης Βηθσαιδα* a deserted place belonging to a town named Bethsaida [98%]
- Matthew 21:5—*και επι πωλον* and on a colt (2%) X *και πωλον* that is, a colt (98%)
- Mark 10:24—*πως δυσκολον εστιν εις την βασιλειαν του θεου εισελθειν* how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God (0,4%) X *πως δυσκολον εστιν τους πεποιθοτας επι χρημασιν εις την βασιλειαν του θεου εισελθειν* how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God (99,5%)
- Matthew 1:25—*υιον* a son (0,5%) X *τον υιον αυτης τον πρωτοτοκον* her son, the firstborn (99,5%)
- Matthew 6:13—omission (1,3%) X *οτι σου εστιν η βασιλεια και η δυναμις και η δοξα εις τους αιωνας* because yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever (98,7%)
- John 5:3<sup>b</sup>-4—omission (0,8%) X "—waiting for the moving of the water; because an angel would go down from time to time into the pool and stir up the water—then the first one to get in after the stirring of the water became well of whatever disease was holding him" (99,2%) [NIV has an insulting footnote that adds the injury of making the angel "of the Lord" (following some 2% of the manuscripts).]

Luke 2:14—*εν ανθρωποις ευδοκίας* toward men of goodwill (0,4%) X *εν ανθρωποις ευδοκία* goodwill toward men (99,4%) [1627 MSS X 6 MSS]

Luke 2:33—*ο πατηρ αυτου* his father (0,9%) X *ιωσηφ* Joseph (98,8%)

Luke 22:43-44—omission (1,3%) X the two verses (98,7%) This is important information that is only recorded here; it is a perversity to challenge it on the basis of such weak evidence.

Mark 15:39—omission (0,4%) X *κραξας* shouting (98,6%) (The picture is severely changed.)

Comment: there are many hundreds of other errors (in the 'critical' text) that damage the Text, even though it may not be possible to describe them as errors of fact or obvious contradictions. But they have a cumulative effect that is certainly negative.

Aside from such fabricated 'problems', the actual Text itself presents us with some seeming difficulties that have been used by the Bible's enemies. I will here discuss a few of them.

### Seeming difficulties actually in the Text

The difficulty of harmonizing the four Gospel accounts surrounding Peter's denials is notorious. Since my discussion occupies a number of pages, I have dedicated a separate appendix to it (H).

### 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.<sup>1</sup>
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).<sup>2</sup>
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).<sup>3</sup>
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).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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 next note).

6. Magdalene takes off immediately to tell Peter—Peter and John run to the tomb to see (John 20:2-3).<sup>5</sup>
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).<sup>6</sup>
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).<sup>7</sup> No mention is made of either angels or guards, so presumably Peter and John saw no one—the place appeared to be abandoned.
11. Magdalene returns to the sepulcher but doesn't get there until everyone is gone (that's why she thought Jesus was the gardener); Jesus appears to her first (Mark 16:9, John 20:11-17).<sup>8</sup>
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).<sup>9</sup>
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).<sup>10</sup>
15. The Emmaus road episode (Luke 24:13-35, Mark 16:12-13).<sup>11</sup>
16. Jesus appears to the eleven, Thomas being absent (Luke 24:36-48, Mark 16:14-18, John 20:19-23).

<sup>5</sup> Her use of the plural "we", verse 2, indicates that she was not alone at the tomb.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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 adrenaline—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.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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's 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 people there are always differing levels of belief and unbelief. People's heads work differently, and at different speeds.

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).<sup>12</sup>
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.

#### ***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, *epi*, 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 wasn't Abiathar taken with the others? I suggest that Ahimelech foresaw what would happen (Doeg probably took off immediately, and Ahimelech figured he wouldn't 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

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<sup>12</sup> I see no way of determining the correct sequence of the events in items 3 and 4.

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.

### **Mary's genealogy—Luke 3:23**

*Και αυτος η̃ν ο̃ Ιησους, ω̃σει ετων τριακοντα αρχομενος, ων ω̃ς ενομιζετο υ̃ιος Ιωσηφ, του Ηλει, του Ματθαν, του Λευι, του Μελχι, . . .*

There are four words here that invite special attention: *και*, *αυτος*, *η̃ν* and *ω̃ς*. 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 ο̃ Ιησους η̃ν υ̃ιος Ιωσηφ*, etc.?

But then, why write *ω̃ς 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 *η̃ν* 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 *η̃ν ο̃ 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 η̃ν Ιησους αρχομενος ω̃σει ετων τριακοντα, ων υ̃ιος, ω̃ς 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).

### ***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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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 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%.<sup>15</sup> 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", passing over Jehoiakim, Jeconiah's father. Since Josiah was the last sovereign king of Judah, and since we need 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.<sup>16</sup> Please notice that once again 'begot' does not refer to a son. 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 he wasn't a sovereign king). But without Jehoiakim we

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<sup>13</sup> 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).

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> It was Dr. Floyd N. Jones who started me thinking along this line (*Chronology of the Old Testament: A Return to the Basics*, KingsWord Press, 1999, pp. 38-42).

<sup>16</sup> 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.

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.

If the second group is made up of sovereign 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 must be placed in both groups—we should neither split him in two, nor double him. To my mind, he belongs in the second group, but that leaves 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?).

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.<sup>17</sup> "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.<sup>18</sup>

Now let's think about 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?<sup>19</sup> 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). But even if that possibility is accepted, how can we justify using David in the first group (having already used him in the second)? Well, I would have to suppose that his name is used as a 'stand-in' for the missing generation(s) in the first group.<sup>20</sup> 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 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).

### ***Where is Mt. Sinai?***

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<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> None of the decent, honest, honorable, responsible mothers are mentioned, only 'exceptions'!

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> A 'stand-in', as the name suggests, is a temporary replacement; it refers to someone who occupies the position of a missing actor during a play rehearsal, for instance. So I am not calling David a generation in the first group; I am using his name to represent the missing generation(s)—rather, I am suggesting that Matthew used it in this way.

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;<sup>21</sup> 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.

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.<sup>22</sup> 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.

### ***Cainan<sup>2</sup>—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<sup>75v</sup> 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

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<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> In our day chariot pieces have been discovered along that land bridge.

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 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D.); similarly we have no copy of Luke's source.<sup>23</sup>

This brief note was inspired by the discussion of the subject given by Dr. Floyd N. Jones in *Chronology of the Old Testament*<sup>24</sup> (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?<sup>25</sup> 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'.

Let's 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 wouldn't 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.

### ***'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]."

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<sup>23</sup> Let's 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<sup>2</sup>; I will argue the same for Joram below. While I'm 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.

<sup>24</sup> *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 14<sup>th</sup> edition, revised and enlarged—the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.)

<sup>25</sup> 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 Cainan<sup>1</sup>, etc., etc.

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 נצר, 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' (Ναζαρηνός) [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' (Ναζωραῖος), 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.

### ***Who bought what from whom?—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.

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.

### ***Bethsaida or Tiberias?***

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",<sup>26</sup> 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 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,

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<sup>26</sup> 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.

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 won't find this miracle in most lists, because few people take the time to give a detailed examination to the Sacred Text.

### ***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: γεργησηνων 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  
γεργησηνων 4,1% (Gergesenes)  
γερασησηνων 0,3% (Gerasenes) NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.  
NIV footnote: "Some manuscripts *Gadarenes*; other manuscripts *Gergesenes*".

Luke 8:26: γαδαρηνων 97% (Gadarenes) AV, NKJV  
γεργησηνων 2% (Gergesenes) TEV  
γερασησηνων 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  
γεργησηνων 3,5% (Gergesenes) TEV  
γερασησηνων 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,<sup>27</sup> "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' 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

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<sup>27</sup> 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'.

more prominent of the two, the one who wanted to go with Jesus. I understand that indeed there were two of them.

### ***Gall, or myrrh? Matthew 27:34 X Mark 15:23***

In the NKJV, Matthew 27:34<sup>a</sup> reads like this: “they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink.” And Mark 15:23<sup>a</sup> 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.

### ***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 don’t 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’.

### ***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.

### ***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.

***“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.

**Seeming difficulties resulting from faulty translation**

I recognize that the line between this type of ‘problem’ and the former can be ‘fuzzy’, and in consequence I am not concerned to defend the placement of each case. I further understand that my use of the term ‘faulty’ transmits an implied criticism of such translations, but since my overriding concern is to defend the Text, that criticism is unavoidable. I use the NKJV because it is my Bible, but any other version, of the way too many that are out there, would also serve the purpose. (It is also true that any particular version may have created ‘problems’ that are its private property, but chasing down such problems is beyond the scope of this exercise.)

***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).

Let’s 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 *γινομαι* 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.

#### ***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 hear the sound (sufficiently impressive that they called it thunder), but only Jesus understood the words.

#### ***"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' have 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.

#### ***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 wasn't 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.

#### ***"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 '*lesus*'], and probably in consequence, in Acts 7:45 Luke refers to Joshua as '*lesus*' [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'.

#### ***"Censer", or "altar of incense"? Hebrews 9:4***

What concerns us here is the Greek word, *θυμιατήριον*, 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.

#### ***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 wasn’t doing.

### ***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).

### ***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.”<sup>28</sup> 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’re 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 include their offspring, the humanoids [see my

<sup>28</sup> 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*.

paper, “In the Days of Noah”]. I am still working on the question of just how the removal is to be done.

### ***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;<sup>29</sup> but Jesus was concealed and went out of the temple, going through the middle of them; yes, that’s 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. 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’s how He got away” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The 99.5% are doubtless correct, and supply an important detail.

### ***“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.

### **Lack of attention to details in the Text**

I recognize that the line between this type of ‘problem’ and the former can be ‘fuzzy’, and in consequence I am not concerned to defend the placement of each case. And there is very little difference in the consequences.

### ***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!

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<sup>29</sup> Since certain situations demanded a stoning, there were doubtless piles of ammunition placed strategically around the temple premises.

***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.

***"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 Massoretes added vowel pointing to the Hebrew Text, many centuries after Christ, they chose 'bed'. Long before, the Septuagint had chosen 'staff'.

***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.

***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).

***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 nesting 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.

#### **'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? Isn't 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).

#### **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.)

#### **Fiction**

I pause to register a fictitious 'problem' that has been used by some to poke fun at the Text. It occurs in 1 Corinthians 13:3. In order to understand what happened, I must use Greek and give the evidence:

καυθησομαι f<sup>35</sup> (50.6%) OC  
καυθησωμαι C (44.7%) HF,RP,TR,CP  
καυχησωμαι P<sup>46</sup> אA,B (1.5%) NU  
seven further variants (3.2%)

Before the *Text und Textwert* series came out, it was generally assumed that the second variant enjoyed a clear, if not heavy, majority of manuscript attestation (it is so listed in HF, NU and von Soden, for example). The difficulty is that such a form would be a future Subjunctive, and Greek grammar does not have a future Subjunctive! So there were those who poked fun at the Majority Text and the TR for printing a non-existent word. We now know that the true majority reading is the first one, being future Indicative, which does indeed exist. I suppose that it was another grammatical feature that led to the main minority variant: the conjunction *hina* most often works with the Subjunctive mode (but the Indicative is not infrequent), and scribes may have made the change without thinking, the more so since the two vowels received the same pronunciation. Here we have a stellar example of what may happen when people take a stance based on an inadequate and incomplete knowledge of the evidence.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this appendix is to defend the objective authority of the Sacred Text, with emphasis on the New Testament. For any text to have objective authority in practice we have to know what it is. This means that God had to preserve His revelation down through the centuries. I have presented evidence to the effect that the original wording of the NT has indeed been preserved to this day. Since the objective authority of Scripture not only depends upon verifiable meaning, but in the first place on divine inspiration, and since a text inspired by God should not contain errors, I took up the question of alleged errors. I denounced the 'poison' foisted on the NT Text by the Hortian theory, but I also discussed seeming difficulties that are actually in the Text, as well as pseudo-difficulties created by faulty translation and/or arising from lack of attention to details in the Text. I am not aware of any seeming difficulty in the NT for which I do not have a solution. With an entirely clear conscience I maintain the objective authority of the entire New Testament Text!!

