

A

Counterfeit

God

A
Counterfeit
God:

An
Unbeliever
Looks At
Jesus

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September 17, 2024

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ISBN: 9798852739933
Imprint: Independently published

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Introduction

Believers say Jesus is the perfect human being. The great teacher. The good shepherd. The world's savior. God.

Believers also say Jesus will return soon.

So does the last book of scripture, which says it "must shortly come to pass" that "he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him."

It hasn't shortly come to pass. It hasn't come to pass at all.

Paul writes: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds."

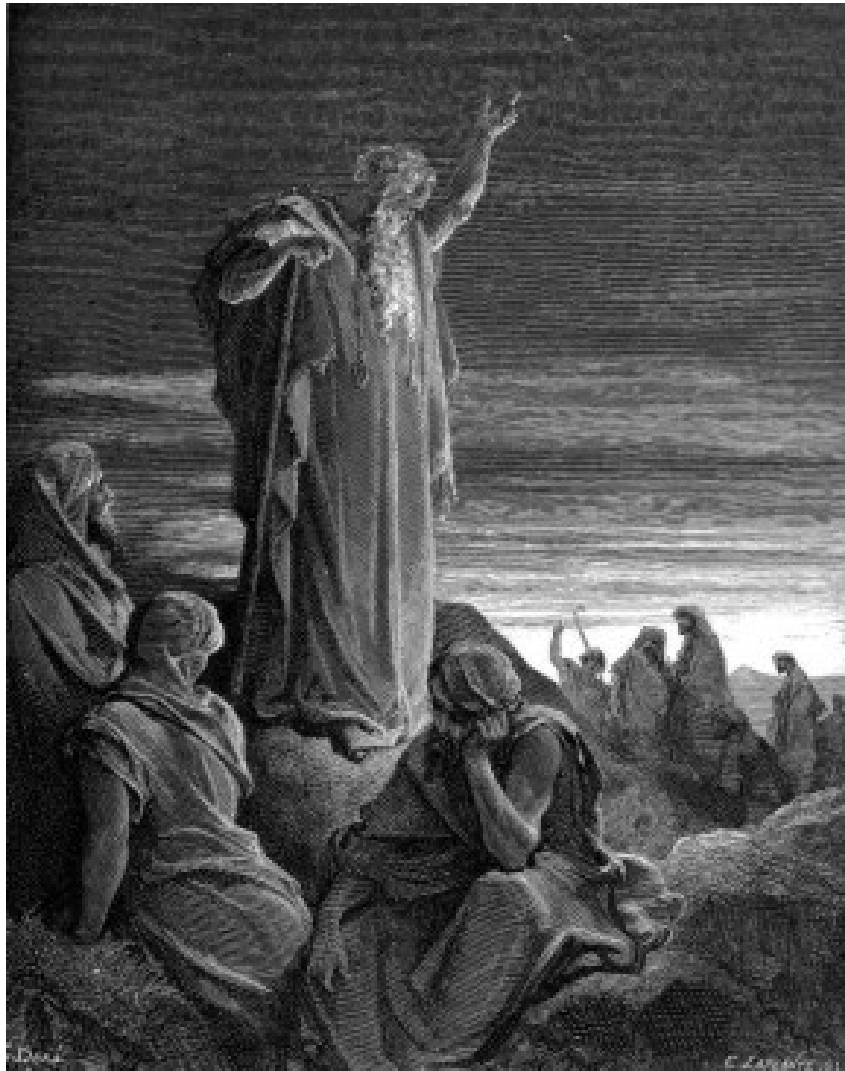
Paul has long since died. Still, no Jesus descending from heaven with a shout.

And Jesus himself says: "After that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall . . . And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. . . . Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done."

Where to begin? The moon has no light of its own to give; it merely reflects sunlight. Stars are too massive to fall to earth. If anything falls, it will be the earth, falling into a star.

And the generation has long since passed. No stars of heaven have fallen to earth. No Son of man has come in the clouds.

Jesus and his Believers are wrong about his Second Coming. Do they make any other blunders? Yes, lots—as we shall see.



Prophecies of Jesus

Believers say the Old Testament has verses that prophesize the life of Jesus. Today, it's easy to electronically search scripture. You won't find the word "Jesus" in the Old Testament.

"Unfair!" a Believer might say. "The prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament don't mention Jesus by name. But they do prophesize the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Son of Man."

Let's check and see.

First, let's check "Messiah." I find "Messiah" only two times in all of the King James. Here are the verses: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. (Daniel 9:25-26)" I can't see any prophecies of Jesus there.

Jesus is also called the "Son of God." Are there prophecies that call Jesus that? In all of the Old Testament, I find the phrase "Son of God" exactly once. "He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. (Daniel 3:25)" No prophecy there.

Well, then, what about the phrase "Sons of God"? That phrase occurs five times in the Old Testament. In the first two occurrences, Sons of God impregnate human women: "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. . . . There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. (Genesis 6:2,4)" In the third and fourth occurrences, the Sons of God are assembled with Satan: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also

among them. (Job 1:6)" and "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. (Job 2:1)" Here's the fifth and last instance: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:7)"

Where are all those prophecies of Jesus that Believers say are in the Old Testament? There's one more phrase we can check: the "Son of Man."

The phrase "Son of Man" occurs frequently in the Old Testament, most often in Ezekiel. It first occurs in Numbers: "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent; (Numbers 23:19)" The phrase occurs next in Job: "How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm? (Job, 25:6)" And Psalms says: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. (Psalms 146:3)"

We looked for prophecies of Jesus in scripture and found instead that Sons of God once impregnated human women, that God is not a man or the son of man, that the son of man is a worm, and that we shouldn't put trust in the son of man.

Is there any prophecy of Jesus in the Old Testament? Believers like to think so. One web site lists three hundred instances of what it claims are prophecy. Here's a sample:

- "Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? (Genesis 18:18)"
- "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. (Numbers 24:17)"
- "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:7)"
- "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto

me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. (Micah 5:2)"

Such verses are prophecy only to people who arbitrarily decide to call them prophecy, only to people who cannot distinguish their own wishful thinking from objective fact.

There is no prophecy of Jesus in the Old Testament.



A Virgin Shall

I recall a nun in my Catholic grade school teaching that Old Testament prophetizes the Virgin Birth of Jesus. She quoted a verse from Isaiah: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)" Indeed, the New Testament itself says that Isaiah prophetizes the Virgin Birth: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us') (Matthew 1:22-23)" I found the verses from Isaiah and Matthew impressive, though it bothered me a bit that Isaiah says "Immanuel" rather than "Jesus."

Some years later on a bargain table in a college bookstore I found "Arsenal for Skeptics" (edited by Richard W. Hinton, 1934 and 1961, A Perpetua Book). The book looked used and was inexpensive. It's an anthology of "Freethought" writings, that is, writings critical of religion. I bought it.

Arsenal for Skeptics begins with what it describes as Old Testament contradiction, absurdities, atrocities and indecencies. It then discusses some forgeries. In the forgeries section, I read the following:

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel." (Matt. v, 23.)

Isaiah's original Hebrew, with the mistranslated words underscored, reads: "Henneh *ha-almah harah* ve-yeldeth ben ve-karath shem-o Immanuel";—which, falsely translated by the false pen of the pious translators, runs thus in the English: "Behold, *a virgin shall* conceive and bear a son, and *shall* call his name Immanuel." (Isa. vii, 14.) The Hebrew words *ha-almah* mean simply *the young woman*; and *harah* is the Hebrew past or perfect tense, "*conceived*," which in Hebrew, and in English, represents *past and completed* action. Honestly translated, the verse reads: "Behold, *the young woman has conceived*—[is with child]—and beareth a son and calleth his name Immanuel."

Almah means simply a young woman, of marriageable age, whether married or not; in a broad general sense exactly like *girl* or *maid* in English, without reference to or vouching for her technical *virginity*, which, in Hebrew, is always expressed by the word *bethulah*.

Arsenal for Skeptics says that Isaiah wrote "a young woman has" not "a virgin shall."

At the time I was neither a Believer nor an Unbeliever. Rather, I was a young man trying to decide what is worthy of belief and what is not. Yet I was shocked by the idea that Isaiah is intentionally mistranslated, that one book of scripture (Matthew) lies about another (Isaiah), that scripture contains a forged prophecy. Was it true?

In those days there was no Internet, so checking was not so easy. But sometime later I found Isaiah rendered in the Revised Standard Version as: "Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Imman'u-el." The translation has "young woman" not "virgin," one sign that what Arsenal for Skeptics says is true.

Later, in The New American Bible I found two footnotes that confirm what Arsenal for Skeptics says: there's no prophecy of the Virgin Birth of Jesus in Isaiah. The first footnote is to Matthew's verses: "This is a prophetic reinterpretation of Isaiah 7,14." The second footnote is to Isaiah's verse: "The church has always followed St. Matthew in seeing the transcendent fulfillment of this verse in Christ and his Virgin Mother. The prophet need not have known the full force latent in his own words; and some Catholic writers have sought a preliminary and partial fulfillment in the conception and birth of the future King Hezekiah, whose mother, at the time Isaiah spoke, would have been a young, unmarried woman."

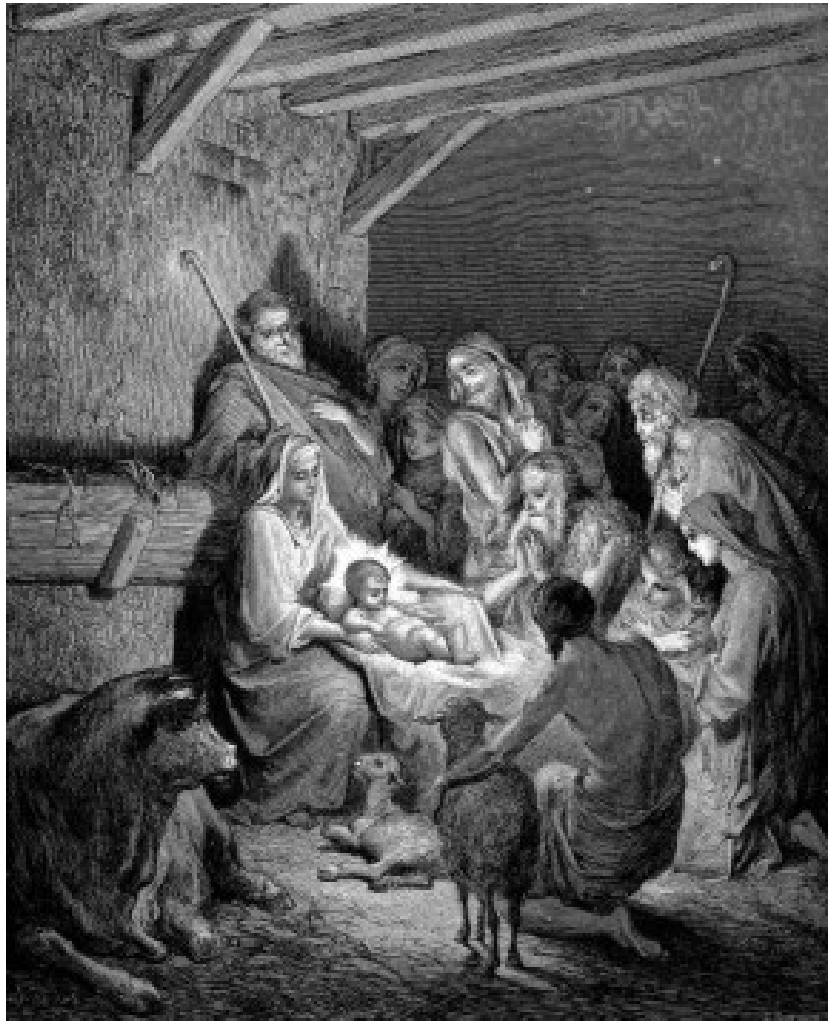
Had I not read Arsenal for Skeptics I would never have understood what the footnotes were saying. But I did understand. "Prophetic reinterpretation of Isaiah 7,14" means "dishonest translation of Isaiah 7,14." And "The Church has always followed St. Matthew" means "The Church has always followed St. Matthew rather than the truth."

Is there any mention of Mary in the Old Testament? A verse from Genesis is often said to be about Mary. In fact, the Roman Catholic School I attended had the verse on a statue of Mary standing on the earth with a serpent beneath her feet. The verse runs: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; *she* shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel. (Genesis, 3:15)" But the verse read in context refers to Eve, not Mary. Worse, as rendered above it's intentionally mistranslated, as is confirmed in the Immaculate Conception article in the 1910 Catholic Encyclopedia, which has: "The translation 'she' of the Vulgate is interpretative; it originated after the fourth century, and cannot be defended critically." The article on The Blessed Virgin Mary in the same Encyclopedia has a more elaborate discussion of the mistranslation. It seems we've another "prophetic reinterpretation."

Does Scripture contain any genuine prophecy of Mary or the Virgin Birth of Jesus? I've never found one. And if any genuine prophecies exist, why would Believers ignore them and instead quote the two bogus prophecies we've just discussed? They wouldn't. There just aren't any genuine prophecies of the Virgin Birth in the Old Testament.

The idea of God impregnating a virgin who gives birth to a child that is both human and divine appears nowhere in the Old Testament. The idea appears frequently in ancient mythology and religion, however.

And in the New Testament.



The Genealogy of Jesus

Scripture first mentions Jesus in the New Testament, in the book of Matthew. Matthew begins by describing the "generation of Jesus Christ" as follows: "Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas . . ." The begats continue for fifteen verses. Here are all the names, in a table.

| | | | |
|----|------------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Abraham | Solomon | Salathiel |
| 2 | Isaac | Roboam | Zorobabel |
| 3 | Jacob | Abia | Abiud |
| 4 | Judas | Asa | Eliakim |
| 5 | Phares | Josaphat | Azor |
| 6 | Esrom | Joram | Sadoc |
| 7 | Aram | Ozias | Achim |
| 8 | Minitab | Joatham | Eliud |
| 9 | Naasson | Achaz | Eleazar |
| 10 | Salmon | Ezekias | Matthan |
| 11 | Booz | Manasses | Jacob |
| 12 | Obed | Amon | Joseph |
| 13 | Jesse | Josias | Jesus |
| 14 | King David | Jechonias, carried to Babalon | |

After the long list of begats, Matthew claims:

"So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. (Matthew 1:17)"

But Matthew blunders; there are not three groups of fourteen generations. Matthew contradicts himself.

Matthew's genealogy also contradicts a genealogy in First Chronicles. Matthew 1:7-9 says: Solomon, Roboam, Abia, Asa, Josaphat, **Joram**, **Ozias**, **Joatham**. But First Chronicles 3:10-12 says: "Solomon, Rehoboam, Abia, Asa, Jehoshaphat, **Joram**,

Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham. Here's a table showing scripture's two different versions of the same genealogy.

| First Chronicles, Ch 3 | Matthew, Ch 1 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| King David | King David |
| Solomon | Solomon |
| Rehoboam | Roboam |
| Abia | Abia |
| Asa | Asa |
| Jehoshaphat | Josaphat |
| Joram | Joram |
| Ahaziah | Ozias |
| Joash | |
| Amaziah | |
| Azariah | |
| Jotham | Joatham |
| Ahaz | Achaz |
| Hezekiah | Ezekias |
| Manasseh | Manasses |
| Amon | Amon |
| Josiah | Josias |
| Jehoiakim | |
| Jeconiah | Jechonias |

Matthew's genealogy of Jesus doesn't have the generations he says it does. And it contradicts First Chronicles. Is that all? Well, no. Matthew's also contradicts Luke's genealogy of Jesus. If we compare the two genealogies, (Refer the Genealogies Appendix) we find almost every entry disagrees. In particular, who is the father of Joseph? Matthew says Jacob; Luke says Heli.

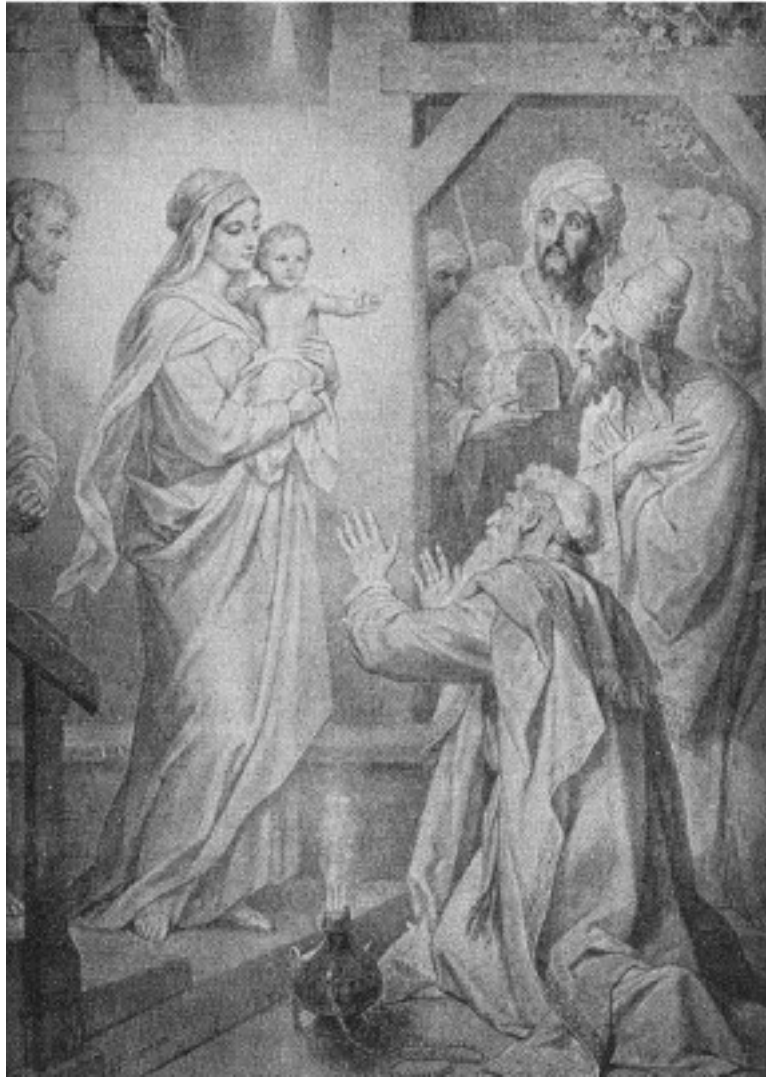
Besides, whose genealogy is it, anyway? Matthew says Joseph did *not* beget Jesus. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 1:18)" But if Joseph didn't beget Jesus, then isn't the long genealogy in Matthew irrelevant?

Matthew makes another blunder when he says: "she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." After all, isn't God the Father Jesus' father? When Jesus says "Our Father, who art in Heaven" doesn't he mean God the Father? If Jesus means God the Holy Ghost, then is God the Father anyone's father?

Next Matthew, as we've discussed, blunders by saying that Isaiah prophesizes the Virgin Birth of Jesus.

Finally, Matthew concludes the chapter by saying of Joseph: "And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS. (Matthew 1:24)" "Knew her," of course, is a polite way of referring to sexual intercourse. So to paraphrase, Matthew says: Joseph didn't have sexual intercourse with Mary until she brought forth her firstborn son. But isn't Jesus Mary's only son? And didn't Mary remain a virgin through her marriage? Roman Catholics believe so as a matter of dogma. Matthew is apparently unacquainted with those dogmas.

Scripture doesn't mention Jesus until the New Testament, which opens with the book of Matthew. Matthew's first chapter is a short one, a mere twenty-five verses. Yet it contains all the blunders and contradictions we've just seen. Thus begins scripture's testimony of Jesus.



Jesus, the Dangerous Child

There's an ancient story of a child, who is God, born to a virgin. Guided by a star, Wise Men visit the child. An evil king, who fears the child, sends his soldiers to kill all children below a certain age. But God warns the child's parents, so the child escapes.

Hundreds of years before Jesus, the story was told in India, in the epic scripture, the Mahabharata. The child is Krishna; the virgin is Devaki; the king is Kansa. The story was told of Buddha in India, of Romulus and Remus in Rome, of Zoroaster in Persian, of Perseus and Adonis in Greece, of Tammuz in Babylon, of Horus in Egypt.

The story is so common that people who study ancient tales and folklore have given it a name, the Dangerous Child Myth.

The story is also told of Jesus. It's the familiar Christmas story of the three Wise Men, following the Star of Bethlehem, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the infant Jesus. The story appears in Matthew's second chapter, with some odd and unlikely details.

First, a quick review of Matthew's version. The Wise Men travel from the East to Jerusalem, following a star. They tell Herod that a great king is to be born. Herod tells the Wise Men to bring him word when they find the newborn king. The Wise Men leave Herod and follow the star to Jesus. God warns the Wise Men not to return to Herod. God warns Jesus and Mary to flee; they go to Egypt. Herod's soldiers murder infants and toddlers, fulfilling a prophecy. Jesus, Mary and Joseph eventually return from Egypt, fulfilling yet another prophecy.

That's the story as Matthew tells it. Now, let's discuss the odd and unlikely details.

First, who are the Wise Men that come from the East? "Wise Men" is rendered as "Magi" in some versions of scripture. What is a Magi? A Magi is a priest of the Zoroastrian religion, a religion of Persia, which was east of Jerusalem.

To Jews, Zoroastrianism was a foreign, pagan religion. In scripture, Jesus' father is hostile to other gods and to other religions. Any Jewish leader would see Zoroastrianism as a false

religion of a false god. It seems strange that God would send pagan priests of a foreign god to visit Jesus.

So why are Zoroastrian priests coming to visit Jesus? They are following a star.

In the Magi's version of astrology, each person's soul has a "fravashi," a celestial reflection of the soul about to incarnate on earth. The fravashi of common people is dim. But the fravashi of a great soul might be so bright as to be visible. So the Magi think they are following the celestial counterpart of Jesus' soul as his soul descends to earth to be incarnated in a human body.

Believers, of course, say God sent the star to guide the Magi to Jesus. So why does God's star fail near Jerusalem? The Magi lose their way, says Matthew, so they ask far and wide in Jerusalem if anyone knows where the newborn king is about to be born, which brings them to the attention of Herod.

In effect, God's star leads the Magi to not Jesus but to Herod. Odd.

Next, Herod is told of a "prophecy" that Jesus will be born in Bethlehem: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. (Micah, 5:2)" Odd, because Micah's verses describe not Jesus but a military leader who will lay waste to the land of Assyria.

Next, Herod says to the Magi, "when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. (Matthew 2:8)" Herod, the Roman-appointed king of Israel, has no intention of worshiping anyone. Rather, Herod means to kill any rival king. It's strange that "wise men" would not be wise enough to suspect Herod. Also, why would Herod trust the Magi? Why not send soldiers with the not-so-wise men, with secret orders to murder the newborn king?

In any event, God's star reappears, which brings us to another unlikely detail. By now "all Jerusalem (Matthew 2:3)" has heard a great king is about to be born. But when the star reappears, no one but the Magi follows it to Jesus. Why not half of Jerusalem, too?

Next, God warns the Magi not to return to Herod. Then God warns Jesus and Mary to flee; they go to Egypt. After Herod dies, they return, which according to Matthew fulfills the prophecy, "out of Egypt I called my son." The entire verse is, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. (Hosea 11:1)" which is no prophecy of Jesus. Matthew also quotes another verse that, he says, prophesizes Herod's murder of the children. The verse is from Jeremiah 31:15. A quick read of Jeremiah 31:15-17 shows the verses refer to the Babylonian captivity, not Herod. Another oddity.

Is Matthew's tale factual? Or is it merely the Jesus version of the Dangerous Child Myth? Only Matthew tells the story; it's nowhere else in scripture. And Josephus, a first century historian, in his "Antiquities of the Jews," describes Herod's many atrocities but says not a word about Herod sending soldiers to kill infants. There is no historical record of the massacre.

Can Matthew be believed? Believers say "yes." Believers insist Matthew's tale is true. Let's suppose for a moment they are right. Let's suppose that God inspires a prophecy of the massacre of infants, just as Matthew says. And let's suppose many centuries later, Herod's soldiers fulfill the prophecy, because Herod fears a rival king. And how does Herod learn of the rival king? From the Magi, says Matthew. And why are the Magi in Jerusalem, talking to Herod, rather than home in Persia? Because God sends a star that leads them there, says Matthew. And who picked the "Wise Men," men so naive as not to suspect Herod's evil intentions, men so naive as to tell the evil Herod about a rival king? God, says Matthew. The same God who inspired the prophecy of the massacre. The same God who warns Mary and Joseph to escape but doesn't warn the parents of the infants.

So, who engineered the massacre? Who manipulated events to bring it about? God, if Matthew's tale is true.

Believers won't admit that conclusion, of course, even though they insist Matthew's story is true. Believers will never admit their God engineered a massacre. Why? Because they picture their God as loving and good. Some Believers may even smile in amused disbelief that any Unbeliever could imagine God doing something

like engineering a massacre of infants. That's fair, because this Unbeliever smiles in amused disbelief at Believers' ignorance of their own scripture. Because scripture describes Jesus' father as capable of slaughtering infants—not merely in one or two verses, but in so many verses it's difficult to know where to start.

Should we begin when God is angry with David? David wants Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, so he has Uriah killed. To punish David, God first gives David's wives to his neighbors in an outdoor orgy of adultery: "I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. (2nd Samuel 12:11)" But that's not enough so: "The LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. . . . And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. (2nd Samuel 12:15-18)"

But why begin with an incident where Jesus' father murders just one infant? Why not begin when Jesus' father murders all the first-born children of Egypt? And why does God kill the children? Because the Egyptian Pharaoh refuses to let the children of Israel leave Egypt. To a Believer the Pharaoh's obstinacy may seem a just reason to murder a nation's children. It doesn't seem just to this Unbeliever. It seems wrong, monstrously wrong. Especially since scripture has: "But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go. (Exodus 10:20)" Apparently, here's another massacre of children engineered by God.

Of course, the Great Flood should also be mentioned, when God murders not one infant, not thousands, but each and every one of the world's infants and children and men and women, aside from Noah and his family. And we might also point out the many occasions when Jesus' father orders others to kill. Here, if you believe scripture, are direct quotes, direct commands from Jesus' father.

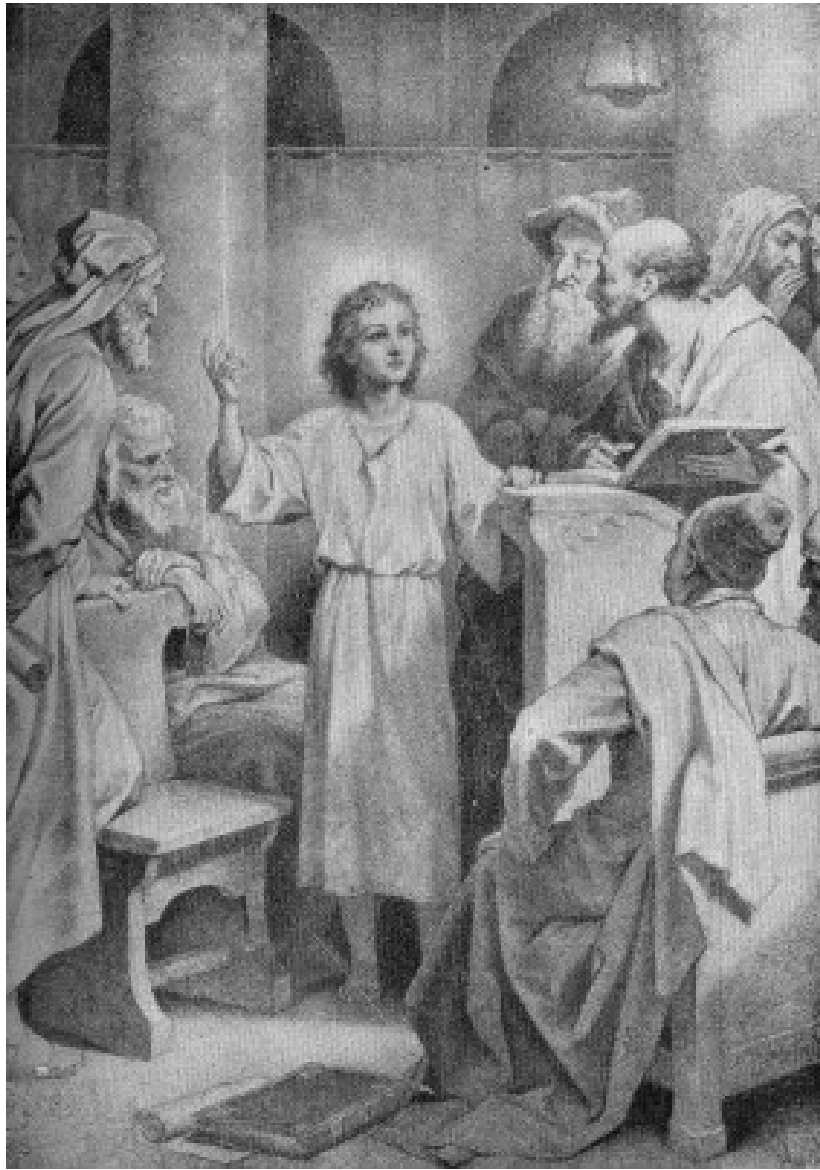
- "Go through the midst of the city . . . and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women . . . (Ezekiel 9:4-6)"
- "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman,

infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. (1st Samuel 15:3)"

- "Utterly destroy all that breathes. (Joshua 10:40)"
- "But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them . . . (Deuteronomy 20:16,17)"

More examples from scripture could be given. Many, many, many more.

Another God might have marked the birth of a son with an exceptionally abundant crop, with manna falling from heaven to feed starving people, with angels, singing songs of joy and elation. The second chapter of Matthew says that Jesus' father marked the birth of his son with a slaughter of little children.



Jesus, the Perfect Son

When Jesus is twelve years old, he travels with his family to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When the feast is over, Mary and Joseph leave Jerusalem but fail to notice that Jesus isn't with them. Only after traveling a day, do they realize Jesus is missing. So, they return to Jerusalem to look for him. After searching the city for three long days they find him in the Temple, teaching. "And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. (Luke 2:48)"

Mary's question is understandable. Why did you leave us without warning? Why did you cause us so much worry and grief? We anxiously searched Jerusalem for three days, not knowing what had happened to you. Why did you do this to us?

Jesus ignores Mary's question and asks two questions of his own: "And he said to them: How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business? And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them. (Luke 2:49-50)"

Why did you look for me, asks Jesus? But were they supposed to go home and hope he'd turn up sooner or later?

Don't you know I must be about my father's business? says Jesus. Evidently not, because "they understood not the word that he spoke to them." Why didn't Jesus help them understand before he deserted them?

But even if they understood, how does "I must be about my father's business" translate into "I'm going to abandon you without warning and stay behind in Jerusalem so don't worry, I'll be alright"? It doesn't.

Why didn't Jesus tell his parents he was staying behind? Why did he let them spend two days traveling, and then three anxious days searching the city for him? Why did he cause his parents such needless worry and grief? Leaving them without warning was cruel. Mary asks: "why hast thou done so to us?" Jesus gives no satisfactory answer.

So, scripture shows that Jesus sometimes is a less than perfect son. What kind of relation did he have with his family? In another incident, Jesus and his mother are at a marriage celebration. Mary

tells him the hosts have run out of wine. "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. (John 2:4)"

"Woman, what have I to do with thee?" That's Jesus talking to his mother.

Jesus addresses his mother as "Woman." Does he ever address her as "Mother"? There is no recorded instance of Jesus calling Mary "Mother". But there's another instance where he addresses her as "Woman" when "Mother" would be more natural. "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. (John 19:26-27)" Why not "Mother, behold thy son"? Isn't that more natural than "Woman, behold thy son"? And why does scripture say "the disciple standing by, who he loved" but not also say "his mother, whom he loved"?

Does Jesus even regard Mary as his mother? In one incident he says his mother is anyone who does God's will. "While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. (Matthew 12:46-50)"

Believers read the verses as: "Well, of course that's my mother and brethren, but who is my spiritual mother and brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of my Father." But that's not what the verses say.

Apologists for Jesus

Using verses from scripture, we've painted an uncomplimentary portrait of Jesus. When scriptural verses contradict a Believer's cherished beliefs, some explaining needs to be done. Apologists try to explain troublesome verses by using various techniques, various defenses.

One defense is the Original Language Defense. The New Testament is written in ancient Greek so the English sentence "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" is a translation. An apologist might question what Greek words were used and if their meanings changed over time. Might the problem, they'd ask, be not with what Jesus said but merely with the translation?

Another defense is the Different Versions Defense, where the apologist switches versions until he finds a translation more to his liking. For example, here's how six versions translate John 2:4.

- Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. (King James Version)
- And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." (New American Standard Bible)
- "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come." (New International Version)
- "Dear woman, why do you bring me into this?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." (New International Reader's Version)
- Jesus replied, "Mother, my time hasn't yet come: You must not tell me what to do." (Contemporary English Version)
- Jesus said, "Is that any of our business, Mother — yours or mine? This isn't my time. Don't push me." (The Message)

An apologist could dispute our portrait of Jesus by disputing the version of scripture we used.

In this book we use the King James Version, the all-time most popular English language version. Other versions might be used. It's been estimated there are hundreds of different English language versions of the Bible. Because there are so many

versions, the Different Versions Defense is often successful: an apologist can often find some version or other that says what they'd like it to say.

Though the Original Language and Different Versions Defenses may defend Jesus, they do so at the expense of scripture. Why? Because once those defenses are used, an obvious question arises: which version of scripture is an accurate, honest translation and which is not?

Can all versions of scripture be honest translations? In particular, look at the six versions of John 2:4 on the previous page. Can all those versions be honest, accurate translations of the same ancient Greek verses? Can the same ancient Greek be translated honestly as "Woman," as "Dear Woman," and as "Mother"? If not, which is what Jesus actually said? Which is the honest translation and which is not?

How can someone who doesn't read ancient Greek decide? One method is to reason as follows. Translators are devout Believers. Would a Believer mistranslate "Mother" as "Woman" and make Jesus appear harsh? Or is it more likely a Believer would mistranslate "Woman" as "Mother" to paint a complimentary portrait of Jesus? Another method of deciding is to consult a commentary on the ancient Greek of the New Testament. Commentaries I've seen say that the original Greek word means "Woman."

Some versions of scripture are dishonestly translated.



Jesus and Family Values

Believers say Jesus is God become man, a man who never marries, a man who is never sexually intimate with a woman, a man who is never sexually active in any way. So how does Jesus feel about marriage and family?

Jesus is against divorce, which some people would call "pro-family." Says Jesus: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery. (Luke 16:18)" A man may not divorce his wife, says Jesus in Luke. In Matthew, Jesus has a different opinion; a man can divorce a wife who is adulterous. "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. (Matthew 5:32)" Why the two different teachings? Is Jesus undecided about divorce? Also, may a wife ever divorce her husband? Jesus doesn't say.

Jesus is fond of little children, another indication of being "pro-family." "And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. . . . And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. (Mark 10:13,14,16)" The phrase "for such is the kingdom of God" suggests that Jesus thinks children are blessed, are closer to God than adults.

In Mark, Jesus quotes with approval the Old Testament command to honor your father and mother. "For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. (Matthew 15:4)" So Jesus thinks it's a good idea to honor father and mother. He also thinks murdering a child who curses father or mother is a good idea and a command from God. (This Unbeliever thinks it's a terrible idea. Most Believers think so, too, but aren't honest enough to admit they disagree with Jesus.)

So, is Jesus "pro-family"? Believers like to think that he is. Yet Jesus never once uses the word "family." In fact, in all of the New Testament the word "family" appears in only one verse: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named . . . (Ephesians 3:14-15)" Jesus and the New Testament have little to say about the family.

But families are composed of fathers and mothers, of sons and daughters. What does Jesus have to say about fathers and mothers? What does he have to say about sons and daughters?

Jesus teaches we should never address our Dad as "Father": "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. (Matthew 23:9)" Further, scripture records several instances where Jesus addresses Mary as "Woman" but none where he addresses her as "Mother."

Jesus says he has come to set son against father and daughter against mother: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (Matthew 10:34-36)"

When Jesus is twelve years old, he leaves his family without notice. He advises others to leave their families without notice, too: "And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:61-62)" In fact, Jesus refuses to allow a man to bury his own father: "And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:59-60)"

Jesus promises rewards to those who leave their families: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. (Mark 10:28-30)"

Further, Jesus advises young men to castrate themselves, hardly a "pro-family" teaching. "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it. (Matthew 19:12)" Jesus approves of men sexually mutilating themselves for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Is there any sexual self-mutilation that women should do? Jesus doesn't say.

So how does Jesus feel about families? "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26)" The Greek word translated as "hate" also means "despise" and "detest."

Believers typically understand Jesus literally only when they like what he's saying. So, they may feel it's unfair to think someone must hate their own father, mother, wife and children to be Jesus' disciple. "Well, yes," a Believer might say, "Jesus certainly does *say* anyone who doesn't hate their own father and mother can't be his disciple. But you can't seriously believe he *means* that, can you? You foolish Unbeliever! How can you be so literal and simple-minded as to think Jesus means what he says? Now listen to me and I'll tell you what he had in mind, what he should have said, what he really meant to say."

Jesus is pro-family, say Believers, ignoring evidence to the contrary.

More Apologists for Jesus

When scriptural verses contradict a Believer's cherished beliefs, some explaining needs to be done. When Jesus himself contradicts a Believer's cherished beliefs, the situation becomes desperate. And desperate situations require desperate solutions.

Let's take a simple question: should a Believer call his or her Dad "Father" or not? Matthew 23:9 has Jesus saying: "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." The quote is from the King James Version. Here's how other versions render it:

- "And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. (New International Version)"
- "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. (New American Standard Bible)"
- "And don't address anyone here on earth as 'Father,' for only God in heaven is your spiritual Father. (New Living Translation)"
- "Don't call anyone on earth your father. All of you have the same Father in heaven. (Contemporary English Version)"
- "And call not [any one] your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, he who is in the heavens. (Darby Translation)"
- "Do not call anyone on earth 'father.' You have one Father, and he is in heaven. (New International Reader's Version)"

So, it seems Jesus actually says, "Call no man your father."

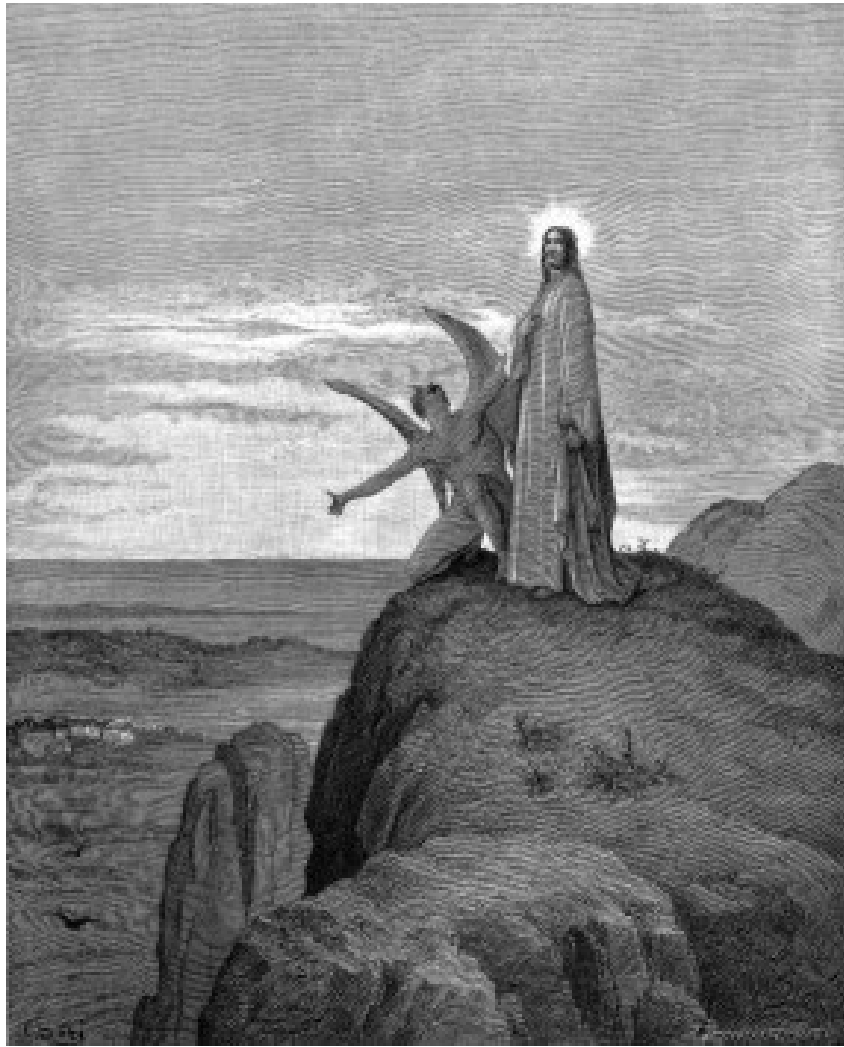
That's silly advice, so Believers of all dominations ignore it in practice and call their Dad "Father." How do they justify their behavior? They decide Jesus doesn't mean what he actually says, that he really means something different. Some groups of Believers decide Jesus really means to say: "call no religious leader 'Father.'" Among these groups, Believers use "Reverend" and "Pastor" to address religious leaders, and feel they are following what Jesus really meant to say in Matthew 23:9. Roman Catholics address their priests as "Father," so they decide Jesus really means to say, "You may call your Dad and your priests 'Father' but always remember God in heaven is your real Father."

Believers admit Jesus said something but defend their contrary behavior by claiming Jesus really doesn't mean what he plainly says, by claiming he means to say something different. What should we call this desperate defense? The "Says One Thing But Really Means Another" Defense? Too wordy. The "I Can Ignore What He Says Because I Know What He Means To Say" Defense? Too long.

When I think of this defense, an image comes to mind. I see an elderly man putting on a hat and raincoat and saying, "Johnny, would you please get me my slippers?" Johnny's mother says, "Gramps must mean his boots, dear." So, I'll call it the "Grandpa" defense.

We all make mistakes. We all have an occasional disconnect between what we say and what we mean. Believers think it makes sense to say Jesus is God and that Jesus sometimes has the same disconnect, that he sometimes doesn't have the presence of mind to say what he means and mean what he says. They see no problem because they "know" what Jesus really means to say. And they will happily explain to you—at great length—what he really means, if you let them. When they're done, they will have fixed what he says so it comes out right and makes sense.

What doesn't make sense is that God Incarnate would need a legion of explainers to clarify simple, direct (and silly) commands as recorded in God's very own book, commands like "Call no man your father."



Resisting Evil

Another defense that apologists use is the Context Defense. "Context" is the text that goes with a verse, the text that precedes and follows it. More broadly, context is the theme, the overall subject.

Here's the context of "call no man your father upon the earth" (Italics mine.)

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do . . . But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. *And call no man your father upon the earth:* for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. (Matthew 23:1-3,8-10)

Certainly, preceding verses mention religious officials. So apologists can argue that Jesus' command only forbids calling religious officials "Father." But the statement "call no man your father" is a direct command that stands on its own. To this Unbeliever, the Context Defense here is invalid.

Apologists try both the "Grandpa" and the Context Defense to explain Jesus' command to "resist not evil." The command is in Matthew 5:39. Here's a sample of the verse in different versions of scripture:

- "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (King James Version)"
- "But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. (New International Version)"
- "But I say unto you, resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (American Standard Version)"

In one version Jesus says not to resist evil, which means not to resist evil people and Satan. In another version he says not to resist

an evil person. In yet another version, he says not to resist evil men. Which version is accurate? Which is what Jesus really said? It doesn't matter because any version of Matthew 5:39 is bad advice, advice to be ignored.

After all, isn't resisting evil what makes a human being decent and good? Granted, good and decent people sometimes do evil things. But isn't resisting evil basic to any sort of spiritual life, indeed, basic to any sort of truly human life? How can we describe someone who doesn't resist evil? They are a moral imbecile, who can't tell the difference between good and evil. Or they are someone who enjoys evil, who revels in evil, who celebrates and promotes it. And which of these would Jesus have his followers become?

And if we shouldn't resist evil people, then whom should we resist? Only good people? No one? Jesus' command not to resist evil is nonsense.

How do apologists explain Jesus' blunder? Some apologists use the "Grandpa" Defense. "Well, yes, Jesus does *say* 'resist not evil' but, well, he certainly doesn't *mean* 'resist not evil'. What he obviously means is . . ." Other apologists use the Context Defense, noting that "resist not evil" is followed by a command to turn the other cheek. Unfortunately for apologists, Jesus' "resist not evil" command occurs in the context of unrelated commands. Here are several verses immediately before and after Matthew 5:39. (Again, italics are mine.)

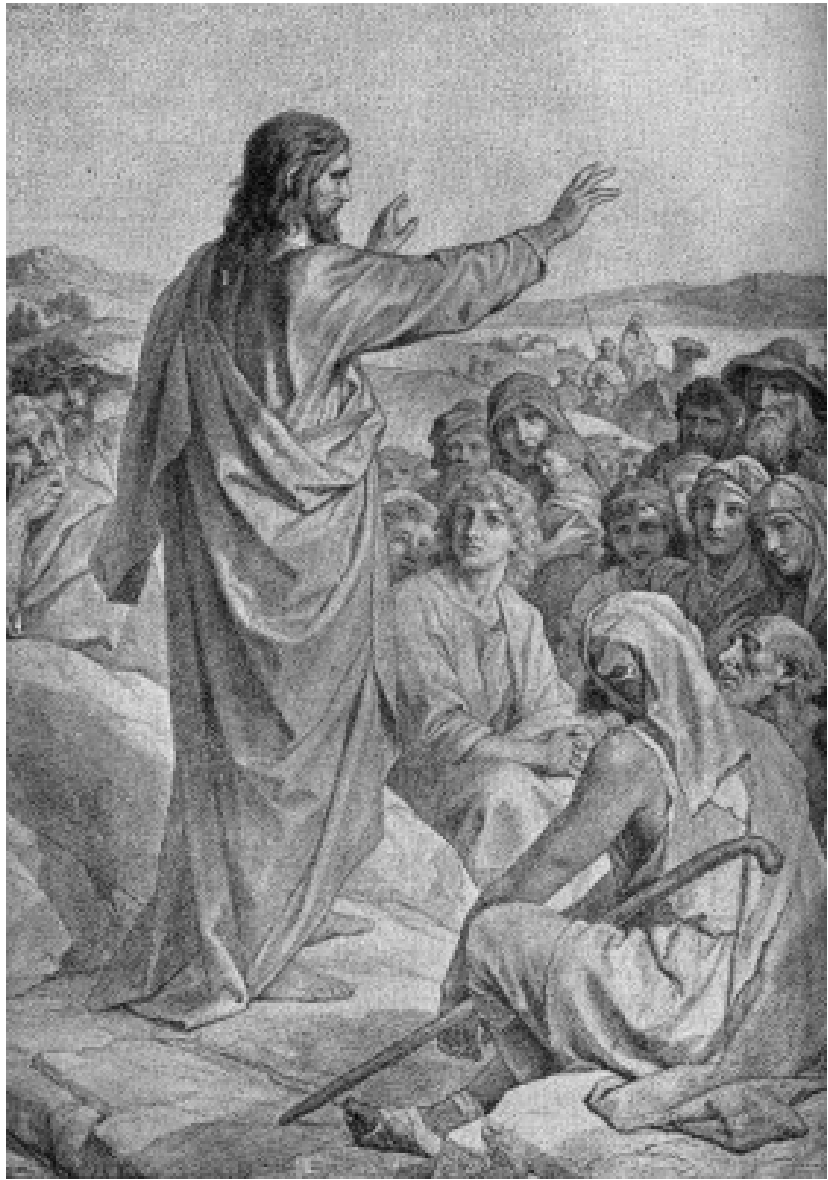
- Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:
- But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:
- Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.
- Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
- But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

(Not to take oaths is another command of Jesus that Believers routinely ignore. "Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" asks the court clerk. Believers have no problem swearing, "I do.")

- Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
- But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
- And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.
- And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil," says Jesus.

"Resist evil as far as you are able," says common sense. Decent people ignore Jesus and follow common sense.



Jesus, the Great Teacher

Believers sometimes say the pinnacle of Jesus' teaching is the Beatitudes, which occur in the fifth chapter of Matthew, verses three to ten. They are numbered below for easy reference.

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
3. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
4. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
5. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
6. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
8. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

What can an Unbeliever say about the Beatitudes? Each Beatitude begins by blessing a person with certain qualities: a person who is meek, merciful, pure in heart, or a peacemaker. Or it blesses someone who is suffering: who hungers, thirsts, is being persecuted. The thought that such people are blessed has given hope and comfort to millions over the centuries.

The nonsense begins when Jesus goes beyond the initial sentiment and tries to explain it.

Look at Beatitude three, for instance; it says the meek shall inherit the earth. We know what it means to be meek. It means someone who isn't self-assertive, someone who allows their rights to be violated, someone who forgives personal injury and holds no resentment. But what does "inherit the earth" mean? That the meek will someday inherit huge tracts of land?

A Believer might dream up some meaning for "inherit the earth." But could they also say when their meaning had been fulfilled? It's been two thousand years. When in history have the meek inherited the earth? It's a meaningless phrase. Jesus might just as well said inherit the wind, or inherit the stars.

Or look at Beatitudes one and eight, which promise heaven and salvation to certain types of people, as does Beatitude six, for

certainly those who see God are saved. Yet no group of Believers today says salvation is for the poor in spirit, the persecuted for righteousness' sake, the pure in heart. Rather, it's only for those who have been baptized, or who have been born again, or who have accepted Jesus as their personal savior, or who belong to the Catholic Church, etc.

Besides, what does it mean to be poor in spirit? Jesus recommends being poor in material possessions, poor in pride, poor in envy, poor in many other things. But why poor in spirit? Shouldn't a Believer want to be rich in spirit? rich in spiritual goods such as faith, hope, charity, and love? Is this another meaningless phrase, like "inherit the earth"?

The fourth Beatitude says people who yearn for righteousness will be satisfied, but it doesn't say when. As righteousness has never been very prevalent on earth, I suppose such people must wait until they get to heaven to be satisfied. So does the fourth Beatitude mean that people who yearn for righteousness are saved, even if they've never accepted Jesus as their personal savior?

Lastly, Beatitude seven says peacemakers shall be called the children of God. I can't recall ever hearing anyone call peacemakers "children of God." Besides, don't Believers call everyone children of God?

The Beatitudes are not the only famous teachings of Jesus, of course. Other famous teachings are to love your enemies, to forgive and turn the other cheek. "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. (Luke 6:27-30)"

What do Believers say about those teachings? They say the teachings are of the highest spiritual caliber, teachings that could only have originated in the mind of God.

What do Believers do about these teachings? They ignore them.

It's been estimated there are in the world over two thousand million Believers in Jesus-based religions. And which of these will

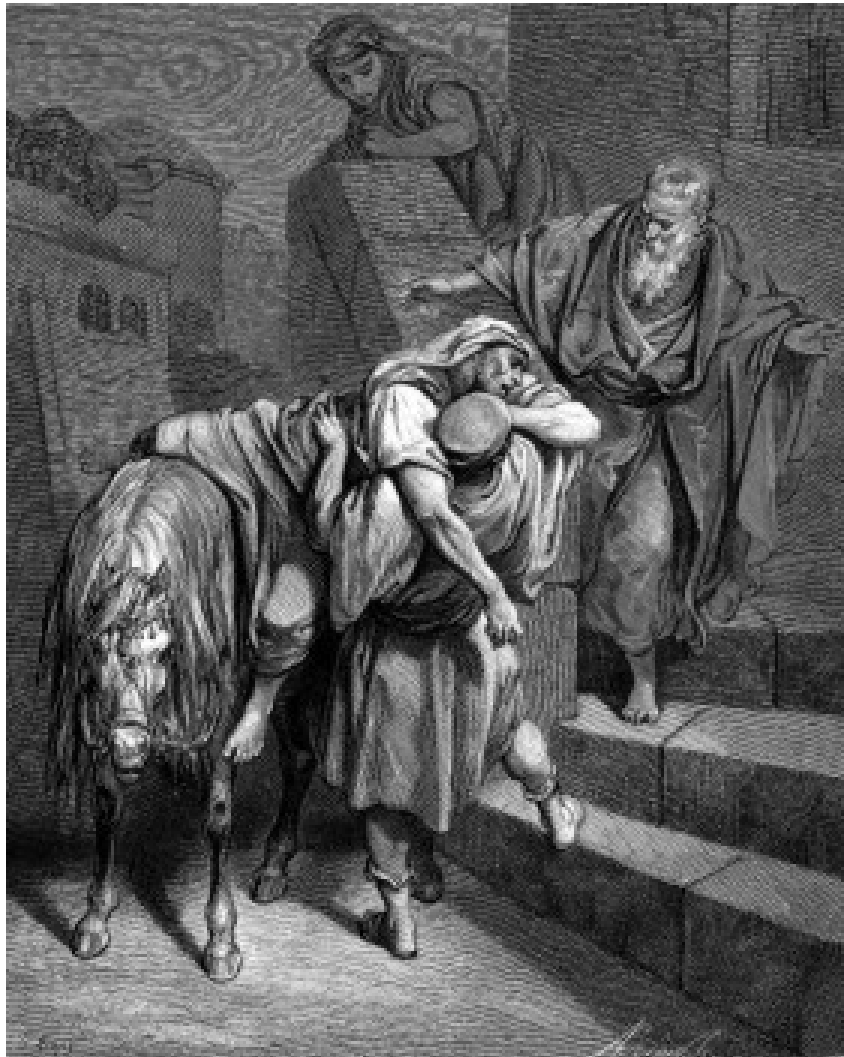
turn the other cheek when struck? Which will allow their possessions to be taken and not ask for them again? Which priest will allow that? Which minister? Which T.V. preacher? I don't know of any.

After Pearl Harbor and the New York World Trade Center disaster of September 11, 2001, did any prominent Believer call for forgiveness, for turning the other cheek? Of course, not. And in Catholic School even the dullest child knows a struck priest or nun will not turn the other cheek but will respond with swift and terrible retribution. If a Believer's child is bullied on the playground, the child is told to avoid the bully or to stand up to the bully. Never is the child told to allow themselves to be hit, to turn the other cheek.

So, if Believers think Jesus' "turn the other cheek" teachings are a bad idea, if Believers reject Jesus' teaching in practice, then what more can an Unbeliever say? Every day, two thousand million Believers pronounce a negative judgment on Jesus' "turn the other cheek" teachings.

Jesus' "turn the other cheek" teachings are something Believers keep on a shelf and admire from afar, not something they use in day-to-day living. The teachings are like a delicate, ornate dinner plate passed down from generation to generation, admired but too fragile to be used for anything.

Useless, in other words.



The Parables of Jesus

Jesus' teachings to "resist not evil" and "turn the other cheek" are simplistic and unbalanced. The teachings are ignored because they deserve to be ignored. Most people discover a more balanced way: to sometimes fight evil and stand up to tyranny and bullying; to sometimes ignore injuries, forget resentments and get on with life.

In contrast, some of the parables of Jesus seem to this Unbeliever realistic, sensible, and even wise.

For example, there's the famous parable of the Good Samaritan, who helps an injured stranger he finds by the side of the road. Jesus' point seems to be we should help and care for each other, even total strangers—not an entirely realistic sentiment, but certainly a lofty and praiseworthy one.

And there's the equally famous parable of the Prodigal Son, where Jesus highlights the love and forgiveness of parents for their children. Believers usually take the parable as describing to the love and forgiveness of God for sinners, too.

In the parable of the Sower (the thirteenth chapter of Matthew) Jesus uses the homily allegory of a man planting seeds to make a point about the kingdom of heaven. A man plants seeds. Birds eat some seeds, some seeds fall among thorns and die, but some fall on good ground and thrive. Later in the chapter, Jesus explains the parable. The seeds are likened to hearing of the kingdom of Heaven. Seeds that fall among thorns and die symbolize Jesus' message heard by people much concerned with the cares of the world. Seeds that fall on good ground and thrive symbolize Jesus' message heard by people ready to be converted. When Believers claim Jesus' parables communicate deep and profound spiritual truths in a down-to-earth manner that everyone can understand, they may point to the parable of the Sower as an example.

Yet, while some of Jesus' parables are intelligent and wise, others are not. For instance, there's a parable of the Talents, which occurs in Matthew and Luke. In the parable, a man going on a trip gives three servants money to keep until he returns. Two of the servants invest the money; one hides it. When the man returns, the two servants return the original money plus a profit. The servant

who hid the money can only return the original sum. The man congratulates the first two servants but says to his financially cautious servant:

. . . thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. . . . For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me. (Luke 19:22,27)

This parable seems less than intelligent and wise.

First, why is the servant "wicked" for being financially conservative? He isn't. Rather the man is greedy: he wants to reap what he didn't sow. Had the first two servants invested and lost the money, the man would be damning them and praising the cautious servant. In any case, is Jesus' point that it's better to invest money than let it lie idle? Is Jesus giving investment advice in the parable?

Next, Jesus says, "and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him." But isn't this nonsense? Isn't it impossible to take something away from "him that hath not"? It seems to me Bob Dylan's "When you've got nothing, you've got nothing to lose." is closer to the truth. Perhaps Jesus meant to say, "from him that hath little" rather than "from him that hath not." But in any case, what's his point, that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer? Is Jesus in the parable making an observation about economics?

And what is Jesus trying to teach when he says "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me"? What happens to his "love your enemies" teaching?

So, what is the point of the parable? Where is its wisdom? Some Believers notice in Matthew's version Jesus refers to the money as "talents." So, they decide Jesus is really speaking about talents and

abilities rather than money. If so, is Jesus saying that our talents shouldn't be buried but should be developed as fully as possible? Is he saying that we should be all that we can be? A U.S. military recruiting slogan says as much. So again, where is the wisdom?

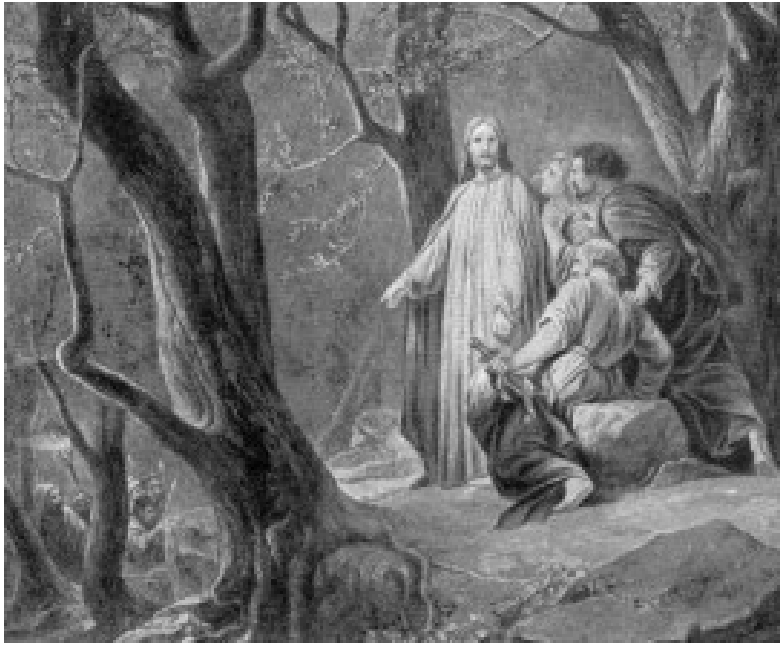
To this Unbeliever, some of Jesus' parables are fine stories and some are less. In particular, the parable of the Talents seems muddled and uninspired.

We should not leave the subject of Jesus' parables without seeing what Jesus himself has to say on the subject.

And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. (Mark 4:10-12)

How can Jesus be a "Great Teacher" if he speaks so as not be understood? How can he be a "Great Savior" if he conceals his meaning from people "lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them"?

Jesus says he purposely confuses people and hides the truth from them. That's bizarre. But it does explain why Believers sometimes must strain to invent sensible meanings for Jesus' teachings and parables. And it explains why so many of his followers can't agree on what he teaches. And it explains why historically so many wars have been fought over religious dogma.



The Fig Tree

Apologists have a simple rule: Jesus is always right. So when Jesus goes on a rampage in the Temple, overturning the tables of the moneychangers and beating them, it's their fault because they are so greedy and corrupt. And when Jesus abuses the Pharisees and Sadducees, calls them fools, serpents and a "generation of vipers," well, they deserve to be abused because they are so very, very evil.

And then there's the instance of the woman begging Jesus to cure her daughter. Jesus ignores her at first and then calls her a dog

"And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. (Matthew 15:22-27)"

Apologists claim that Jesus is merely testing her. And, indeed, Jesus does eventually cure her daughter. So, apologists say, though Jesus appears cruel and abusive, his behavior is for the woman's own good. The woman has only to grovel a bit and liken herself to a dog, to prove her faith and sincerity. Then Jesus cures her daughter.

To an apologist Jesus is always right—even when the injured party is a tree.

One day Jesus is hungry. He sees a fig tree and walks over, thinking he'll have some figs. But when he gets to the tree all he finds are leaves. "Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying,

How soon is the fig tree withered away! (Matthew 21:18-20)" Jesus curses the tree and it immediately withers away.

But why curse a tree so that it withers and dies? For its own good, somehow? Is it the tree's fault it doesn't have any figs? Can fig trees freely decide whether to have figs or not? Did this fig tree decide not to have figs when God ordained it should, and therefore deserve to be cursed?

Mark tells the same story with a contradictory fact: in Mark's version the disciples don't see the tree wither until the next morning. Mark also adds a bizarre detail. "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. . . . And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. (Mark 11:12-14,20-21)"

"For the time of figs was not yet," writes Mark.

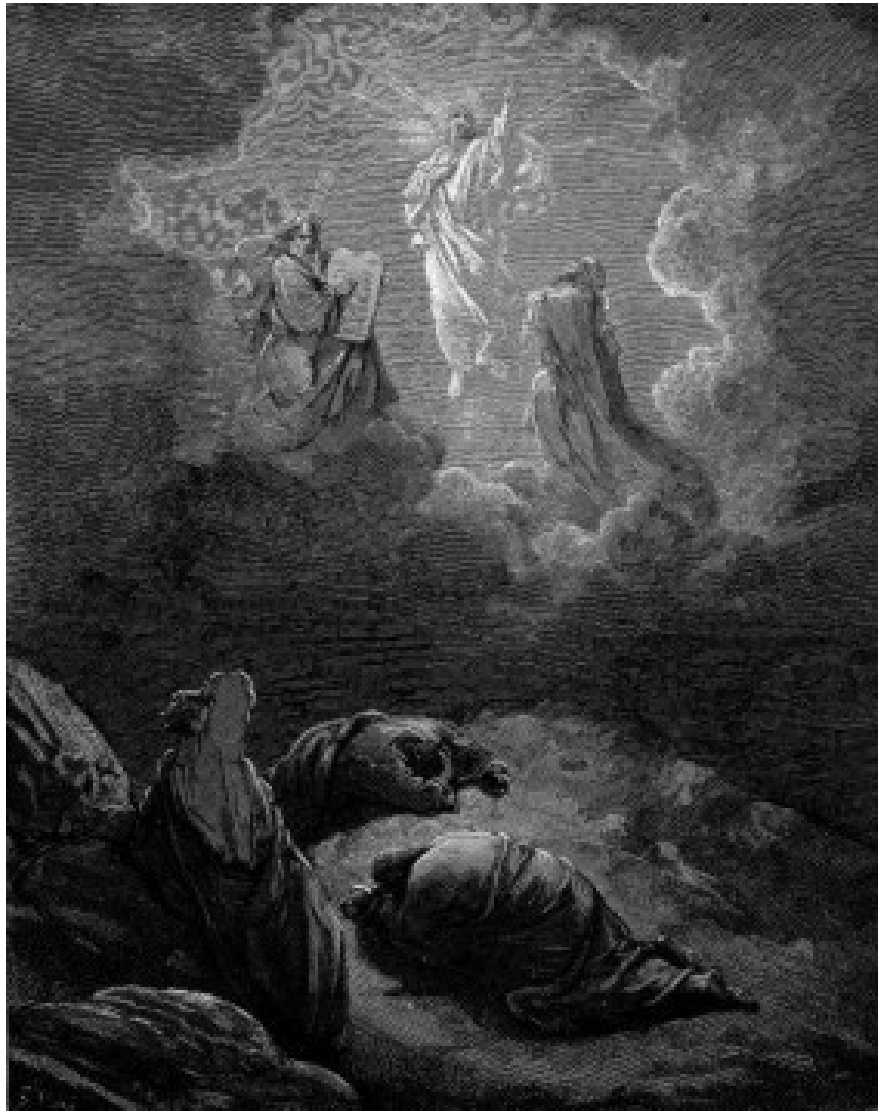
"For the time of figs was not yet." Bizarre.

Think about it.

God creates fig trees. God ordains the time of year when fig trees shall bear figs and the time of year when fig trees shall not bear figs. Then God incarnates as Jesus and decides to eat a fig during the time of year when God ordained fig trees would not have figs. So, God curses the tree and withers it. Now when the time of figs arrives, other travelers will come to the tree and go away hungry.

Even apologists can't blame the tree. So, they try another defense: they say the story has some deep symbolic meaning. That is, they refuse to believe the story as written. Then they decide the fig tree must be a symbol of something or other, and invent some meaning for the story where Jesus is still right.

An Unbeliever might think Jesus has a problem controlling his anger.



Jesus, the Truth

I am the truth, says Jesus. But is what Jesus says always true? Is it always accurate?

No, it is not. Some things Jesus says are scientifically untrue. For instance, he says: "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall . . . (Mark 13:24-25)" The moon has no light of its own to give; it merely reflects sunlight. So if the sun darkens, the moon automatically darkens too. And only someone who believes the stars are tiny points of light could imagine them falling to the earth.

Jesus also blunders when he says a dead corn of wheat brings forth much fruit. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John 12:24)" Not true. A dead corn of wheat does not bring forth much fruit. Because it's dead.

And he wrongly says the mustard seed is the smallest of seeds and grows into a tree. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed . . . Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree . . . (Matthew 13:31-2)" The mustard is not the smallest of seeds; some orchard seeds are smaller. And the mustard seed grows into a bush, not a tree. There's no such thing as a mustard tree.

Speaking of mustard seeds, on one occasion the disciples' unbelief prevents them from casting out a devil. If only they had faith as small as a mustard seed, says Jesus, then nothing would be impossible for them. "And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. (Matthew 17:18-20)" With enough faith nothing would be impossible for them, says Jesus. Nothing except casting out the devil, for he continues: "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. (Matthew 17:21)"

Doesn't Matthew 17:20 ("nothing shall be impossible for you") logically contradict Matthew 17:21? Elementary logic says, "Yes." (Some versions omit Matthew 17:21, for example, the New International Version.)

Here are some other logical contradictions of Jesus. He says: "He that is not with me is against me . . . (Matthew 12:30)" Is that reasonable? For example, the Native Americans of Jesus' time weren't with him—they didn't even know he existed. So were they against him? Why can't someone be neutral? "He that is not with me is against me." That doesn't seem true. Especially since Jesus also says "He that is not against us is for us. (Luke 9:50)" and "For he that is not against us is on our part. (Mark 9:40)" Jesus' statement in Matthew contradicts his statements in Luke and Mark. Elementary logic says contradictory statements can't both be true.

Elementary logic also has a form of reasoning called the syllogism. Here's a typical syllogism.

All men are mortal.

Socrates is a man

Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

Here's another.

If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.

I am one that bear witness of myself . . .

Therefore, my witness is not true.

Jesus speaks the first statement (John 5:31) and the second (John 8:18). Elementary logic gives us the third statement.

Speaking of logic, there's an utterance of Jesus that's illogical, wrong, and a bit silly, too. During a rant against lawyers, he says: "Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchers of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchers. (Luke 11:47-8)" So suppose there's a son—let's call him Sam. And suppose Sam's father, Frank, kills a prophet. And suppose Sam builds a tomb for the death prophet. Building the tomb, says Jesus, proves that Sam allowed his father's deed. What? How does building a tomb for a dead prophet prove Sam allowed his father to kill the prophet? Sam might have been visiting his Aunt three villages away when Frank killed the prophet. Or Sam may not have

been born yet. What logical connection is there between building a tomb and allowing a murder? None.

Even what Jesus says about scripture is sometimes untrue. In one instance he says: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (John 7:38)" Nowhere does scripture mention living water flowing out of anyone's belly.

Next, there's the death and resurrection of Jesus. I recall in Catholic school observing Good Friday. We were taught Jesus hung on the cross on Friday from 12:00 to 3:00. Then, as the Apostle's Creed says, "He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again." But if Jesus really died on Good Friday and rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, why does he say he'll rise after three days rather than on the third day? "The Son of man must . . . be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:31)" Three days after Friday is Monday not Sunday.

Further, there are only two nights between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, so why does Jesus say he'll be in hell for three nights? "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:40)" Is Jesus telling more untruths? Or do Believers commemorate his death and resurrection on the wrong days?

Lastly, before descending into hell Jesus tells the good thief: "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:43)" But Jesus will be in hell for, depending on whom you believe, two or three days. So how can the good thief be with Jesus in heaven that day?



Jesus, the Great Healer

The news story is about a woman and her newborn baby. Doctors say the baby needs medical treatment. The woman and her husband, both fervent Believers, refuse on religious grounds. Without the treatment the baby will die, doctors say. The couple believes the baby will live or die as God wills, that no medical treatment can change the outcome, that their prayers and faith will suffice. The Social Services Department petitions a judge to overrule parental objections and allow the treatment. The Department argues that the woman's first and second child died from the medical problem, and that the baby will also die unless treated.

What treatment is best for the baby? That is the question before the judge. The parents favor prayer and faith, a supernatural treatment. The Social Services Department wants to use medical methods.

How should we treat our own sickness and disease? How can we heal ourselves? There are two general methods. There's the supernatural method, which includes prayer, penance, the laying on hands, fasting, and "relics," the bones and possessions of departed saints. And there's the scientific method, which includes medicines and treatments proven by science.

What causes sickness and disease? Again, there are two broad answers: the supernatural answer, where causes are demons and sin; the scientific answer, where causes are bacteria, viruses and genetic problems.

How to treat sickness and disease is a practical and immediate question. What causes sickness and disease is an important question, too, because the cause determines the treatment. If demons and sin are the cause, then prayer and penance may help, but aspirin is useless. If bacteria, viruses and genetic problems are the cause, then medical prescriptions and treatments are appropriate, and relics won't help.

Two thousand years ago, people wonder about the causes and best treatment for sickness and disease. Many people believe the supernatural view. Yet ancient Greek and Roman physicians are

moving towards the scientific view. They suspect that natural agents are the cause, and are beginning to experiment, test, and methodically record the results.

Then comes Jesus. For Believers, Jesus is God. So his view of sickness and disease, and his method of cure, have God-given authority.

How does Jesus cure? He cures by laying on of hands: "and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many . . . (Luke 4:40-41)" He cures by ordering a devil to leave: "there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed . . . And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. (Matthew 17:14,18)" He cures by casting out a devil: "As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake . . . (Matthew 9:32-33)"

Jesus describes sickness as a bond of Satan (Luke 13:11-16). He tells a woman that faith has cured her: "And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment . . . and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. (Matthew 9:20-22)" And he gives his disciples the power to heal by casting out unclean spirits: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. (Matthew 10:1)"

After Jesus is gone, his followers teach the supernatural method of treating disease. Thus, we read: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray . . . Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord . . . (James 5:13-14)" In a nutshell that is what Jesus and scripture have to say about healing. To cure, you lay on hands, cast out devils, and have faith. Nowhere does Jesus say natural agents are causes and cures are to be found in nature. Rather, sin and demons cause sickness and disease.

Thus, Origen of Alexandria (born 185, died 254), an influential early Believer, writes: "It is demons which produce famine,

unfruitfulness, corruptions of the air, pestilences; they hover concealed in clouds in the lower atmosphere, and are attracted by the blood and incense which the heathen offer to them as gods." Thus, Gregory of Nazianzus (born 333, died 390), another famous Believer, proclaims that bodily pain is caused by demons, that medicines are useless, and recommends instead the laying on of consecrated hands. Thus Saint Augustine (born 354, died 430), that famous "Father of the Church," teaches: "All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to demons." Thus St. Gregory of Tours (born 538, died 594) teaches it's sinful to rely on medicine rather than the intercession of saints.

Thus, a thousand years of medical stagnation in Western Europe. Today, an Internet search on the "history of medicine" may mention Egyptian medicine, Persian medicine, Chinese medicine, Greco-Roman medicine, Islamic medicine, Renaissance medicine, and Enlightenment medicine. But what about Western European medicine between the ancient Greco-Roman period and the Renaissance? What about the medicine of the Middle Ages? Sometimes it's not mentioned. Or you may find something like: "Western medicine advanced very little in Europe during the Middle Ages. Scholarship fell into the religious sphere, and clerics were more interested in curing the soul than the body. Many theologians considered disease and injury to be the result of supernatural intervention and insisted that cures were only possible through prayer. No new medical research was conducted, and no new practices were created." The teachings of Jesus about sickness and disease stopped the progress of medical science in Western Europe for centuries.

By the 1500's the teachings of Jesus have dominated Western Europe for over a thousand years. The teachings of Jesus, Origen and Augustine have become the beliefs of the average person. The accepted and widespread view is that sin and demons cause sickness, disease, pestilence, and famine; that pain is God's punishment; that lightning is God's avenging sword.

In 1591 Euphanie Macalyane accepts a potion from her midwife to lessen the terrible pain of childbirth. Believers see childbirth pain as punishment for Eve's sin (Genesis 3:16) and are enraged

that any woman would try to evade God's punishment. So the pious James VI, then King of Scotland, later King of England, brings Euphanie to Edinburgh and burns the young mother alive at the stake. (He also has scripture translated into English: he's the "King James" of the King James Version.)

Even as late as 1752, many Believers hear the Voice of God in thunder and see lightning as a tool of God's punishment. So they see Benjamin Franklin's lightning rod as "attempting to control the artillery of heaven" and call it "the heretical rod." In 1755 religious leaders in Massachusetts explain an earthquake as God's punishment for the use of lightning rods in Boston. One preacher says Boston has more lightning rods than anywhere else in New England and that "Boston seems to be more dreadfully shaken. Oh! There is no getting out of the mighty hand of God." Yet even Believers can see that prayer, holy relics and ringing church bells fail to save churches—God's own homes—from lightning, while the lightning rod saves churches and the homes of the religious and irreligious alike. Belief in lightning as God's punishment slowly dies.

Yet belief in Jesus' supernatural method of treating disease still exists in 1795, when Dr. Edward Jenner discovers smallpox vaccine. Religious people denounce his discovery as "defiance to Heaven itself, even to the will of God." And the belief still exists in 1847 when an Edinburgh physician, Dr. James Simpson, discovers chloroform can ease the pain of childbirth. Says the Scottish Calvinist Church: "What a Satanic invention! What a shame upon Edinburgh! To all seeming, Satan wishes to help suffering women but the upshot will be the collapse of society, for the fear of the Lord which depends upon the petitions of the afflicted will be destroyed."

And belief in Jesus' supernatural method of treating disease still exists ninety years after the discovery of smallpox vaccine, in 1885, when Montreal, Canada experiences a smallpox epidemic. Says one priest: "If we are afflicted with smallpox, it is because we had a carnival last year, feasting with the flesh, which has offended the Lord; . . . it is to punish our pride that God has sent us smallpox." Catholic Bishops oppose vaccination and advise

increased prayers, especially the rosary. A special procession in honor of the Blessed Virgin is organized. Many Catholics refuse vaccination. Many Catholics die.

And the belief in Jesus' supernatural method of treating disease still exists some years ago, when it kills a woman's first two children. Fortunately, the judge agrees with the Social Services Department. So, the woman's newborn baby is treated in a sensible way, with modern medicine, rather than by Jesus' supernatural method.

The belief still exists today, of course, although over the centuries, more and more people have learned to reject Jesus' supernatural method of treating disease and to use medical science instead. Today hardly anyone, even Believers, use Jesus' method of treating disease. Nonetheless, many Believers feel compelled to defend Jesus' teachings.

One defense insists that the healing miracles of Jesus are meant only to demonstrate his authority and power, not to teach anything about medicine. That defense is based on wishful thinking. In fact, scripture records approximately thirty-six different miracles of Jesus (Refer the Miracles appendix) and twenty-three of those miracles—almost two-thirds—concern healing. Nowhere in scripture does Jesus say anything like: "I do these miracles so that you may know who I am. But the Father has provided you with many means of healing. Look to the herbs and plants around you. Seek and you shall find." Had Jesus said something like that, a thousand years of medical stagnation, a thousand years of needless human suffering, might have been avoided. And the woman's first two children would not have died.

Or Jesus might have shown his power by performing nature miracles, which don't involve healing. Stopping a storm, feeding five thousand people, walking on water—had Jesus performed only nature miracles, he could have shown his authority without halting the advance of medicine.

Another apologist defense is to reframe the question in terms of faith. The Believers' faith is that miracles happen, that prayer works. The Unbelievers "faith" is that miracles are impossible and prayer is useless. This defense attempts to change the question.

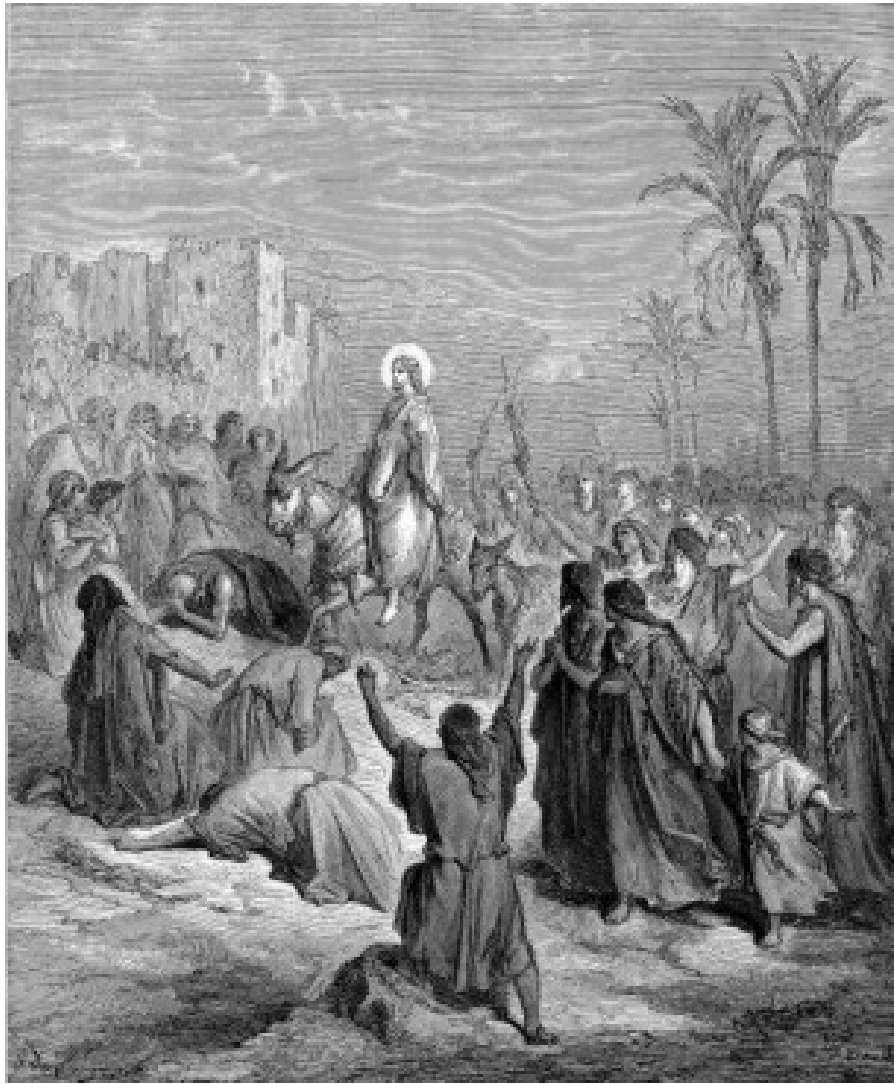
The question is not whether miracles happen or not, whether prayer works or not. The question is: how should we treat sickness and disease, day after day, time after time? Today, even people who believe in miracles are usually smart enough not to believe in Jesus' method of treating disease but use modern medical methods instead. Once, when people were sick, they used Jesus' method. But the centuries have shown that Jesus' method doesn't work.

Scripture says Jesus healed a few people. History says that by following Jesus' example his Believers crippled the advance of Western medicine for a millennium.

Surely, Jesus' teachings about sickness and disease rank among his greatest blunders.

Jesus' Condemnations of Slavery

There aren't any.



Palm Sunday

On Palm Sunday, Jesus enters Jerusalem for the last time. He enters riding on a colt, says Mark 11:7 and Luke 19:35.

Matthew says Jesus enters Jerusalem riding not one but two animals, an ass and a colt: "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. (Matthew 21:4-5)" Matthew claims Jesus is fulfilling a prophecy from Zechariah 9:9.

There are two problems with Matthew's claim.

The first problem is that Zechariah 9:9 mentions one animal, not two; the verse mentions a single animal that is a colt (male) and a foal (young animal, not yet of breeding age). In Zechariah an idiom common to ancient Hebrew is used where the second phrase elaborates upon the first. An English language example would be, "And she spoke to George Washington, even the first president of the United States." Jesus uses the same idiom when he says: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. (John 3:13)" Some versions of scripture incorrectly translate Zechariah 9:9 as if two animals are involved; many versions translate it correctly. The New Life Version, for instance, renders Zechariah 9:9 as: "He is not proud and sits on a donkey, on the son of a female donkey."

Matthew says Jesus fulfills a prophecy by riding two animals. But the original verses describe a man riding one animal. That's the first problem. The second problem is, how can Jesus ride two animals at once? I once saw a woman ride two horses in a circus, standing, one foot on each animal's back. Is that how Matthew would have us believe Jesus rides into Jerusalem?

In any event, Jesus rides into Jerusalem. The people cover his path with palm trees branches and greet him as their king: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! (Luke 19:38)" and "Blessed is the King of Israel! (John 12:13)" Jesus allows the people to greet him as their triumphant king. What is he thinking?

History tells us the Romans first conquer Jerusalem sixty-three years before Jesus' birth. Thereafter, the Roman Senate decides

who will rule the Jews, who will be their king. But the Jews prove a difficult people to conquer. The Romans suppress insurrection after insurrection.

Scripture tells us that Jesus teaches for several years and the Romans take no notice. Why should they? Jesus and his followers carry no sword, command no army, are no threat to Roman rule. True, Jesus may claim to be the Son of God, but it's a God that the Romans don't believe in, so why should they care what Jesus claims? They don't.

Then comes Palm Sunday. Jewish Believers pour into Jerusalem for Passover. Religious and nationalistic passions run high. The Romans are especially fearful of revolt. Jesus rides into Jerusalem and allows the city to publicly proclaim him the King of Israel. The Romans see yet another insurrectionist who must be captured and crucified.

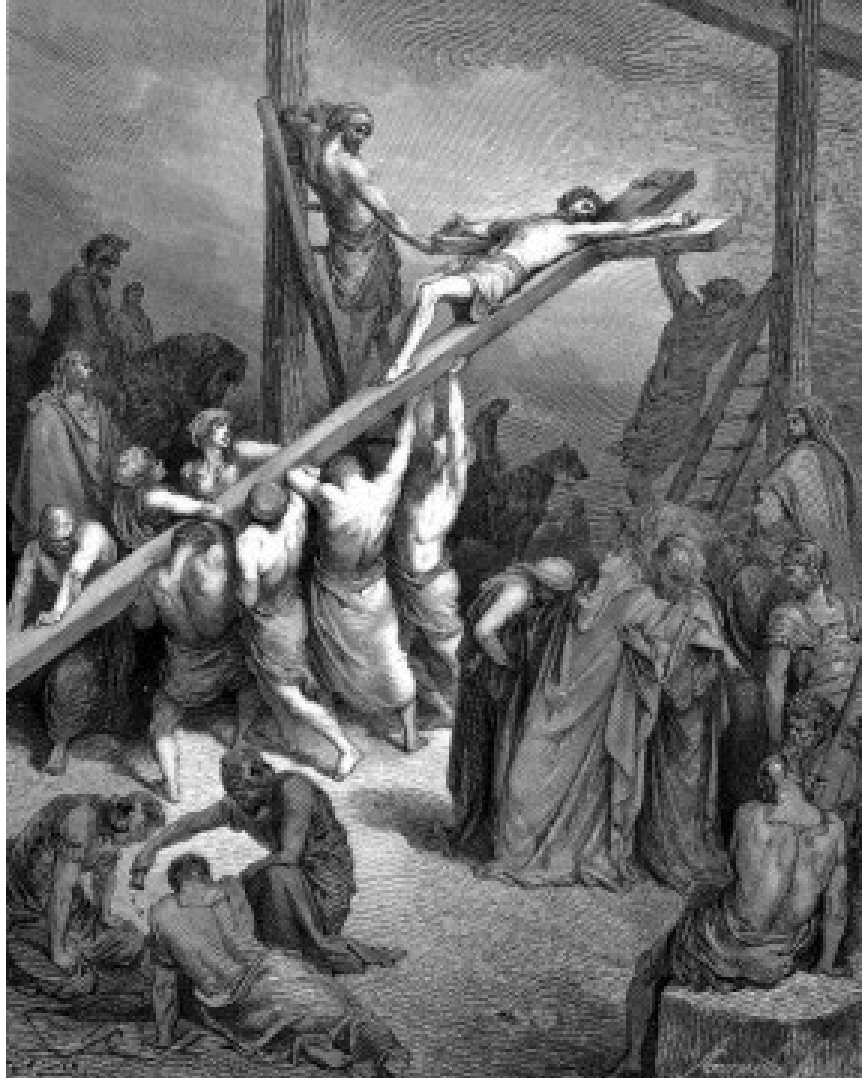
And how does Jesus see himself? I recall a nun saying that Jesus is a spiritual king, that his kingdom is not of this world. But can Jesus seriously expect the brutal and worldly Romans not to see him as a political threat after the entire city proclaims him their king? And what of the people of Jerusalem? Are they saluting a purely spiritual king? Or do they see Jesus as a fighter against Roman rule, as the son of David who will finally defeat and expel the hated Romans and reestablish the kingdom of Israel under Jewish control?

In any event, the Romans see the proclamation of any other king as a call to rebellion, as a challenge to their rule. By Thursday they have Jesus in custody. They torture him that night. The next day, they execute him by crucifixion, a punishment given to rebels, to people who threaten Roman authority. On the cross they put a sign. Scripture disagrees on exactly what the sign says.

- This is Jesus the King of the Jews. (Matthew 27:37)
- The King of the Jews. (Mark 15:26)
- This is the King of the Jews. (Luke 23:38)
- Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews. (John 19:19)

But the sign makes no mention of Jesus' claim to be God's son.

The Romans don't execute Jesus because he says he is God's son. They execute him because he let the city of Jerusalem proclaim him their king, in defiance of Roman rule.



Who Killed Jesus?

So, who killed Jesus? The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees, says scripture.

Scripture describes the chief priests and scribes plotting the death of Jesus. "Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. (Luke 22:1-2)"

Scripture describes a mob "from the chief priests and elders" capturing Jesus. "Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. . . . Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, (John 18:3,12)"

Scripture describes the High Priest condemning Jesus. "The high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. (Mark 14:61-64)"

Scripture says the Jewish leaders wish to see Jesus put to death because he claims he is God's son, to them a blasphemous claim. That's believable. But they also fear Jesus will incite a revolt against the Romans. The leaders know a revolt is doomed and fear the terrible Roman retribution that will follow. Their fear is well founded: less than forty years after Jesus' death, the Romans decide they've had enough insurrection and rebellion. They utterly destroy Jerusalem, killing over 100,000 Jews and taking perhaps another 100,000 to Rome as slaves. On the ruins, they build a new city called Aelia Capitolina.

So perhaps the Jewish leaders see Jesus as merely another religious fanatic, out of touch with the reality of Roman power, who thinks that God will give him victory, who will incite a rebellion that will lead to the death of thousands of Jewish men, women and children. Or perhaps they want to punish him for what they view as blasphemy.

In any event, the Jewish leaders deliver Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judaea. This is where the story becomes strange. Pilate has before him the man who the people of Jerusalem a few days ago proclaimed their king. Yet according to the twenty-third chapter of Luke, Pilate can find "no fault" with Jesus. Strange. The Roman ruler can find no fault with the man Jerusalem just four days ago proclaimed its king, in defiance of Roman rule. So Pilate sends Jesus to Herod, the Roman appointed King of Judaea, the person whom a rival king would dethrone. But Herod shows no hostility toward Jesus. Rather, scripture says he is "exceeding glad" to see Jesus, because he hopes to finally witness one of Jesus' miracles. If Herod, the king ordained by Rome, has any fear or hatred of Jesus, who the people of Jerusalem have just proclaimed their king, scripture doesn't mention it.

So scripture would have us believe that on Sunday Jesus allows all Jerusalem to hail him as its king, but that a mere four days later Pilate, the Roman governor, and Herod, the Roman appointed king, can find no fault in him. Herod is delighted to meet Jesus, says scripture. Pilate, we are told, wants to let Jesus go free, and only condemns him because the Jewish leaders demand it.

Is such an account believable? Even some scriptural scholars are skeptical. They know the gospels' original manuscripts no longer exist today and the oldest copies we have were written about 350 A.D. So, for three centuries the original stories may have been altered—"redacted" is the scholarly term—to place more emphasis on the role of the Jewish leaders and less on the Roman authorities.

So, who is really responsible for the death of Jesus? The Romans? The Jewish leaders?

Jesus. Jesus is responsible for his own death, from the perspective of an Unbeliever or of a Believer.

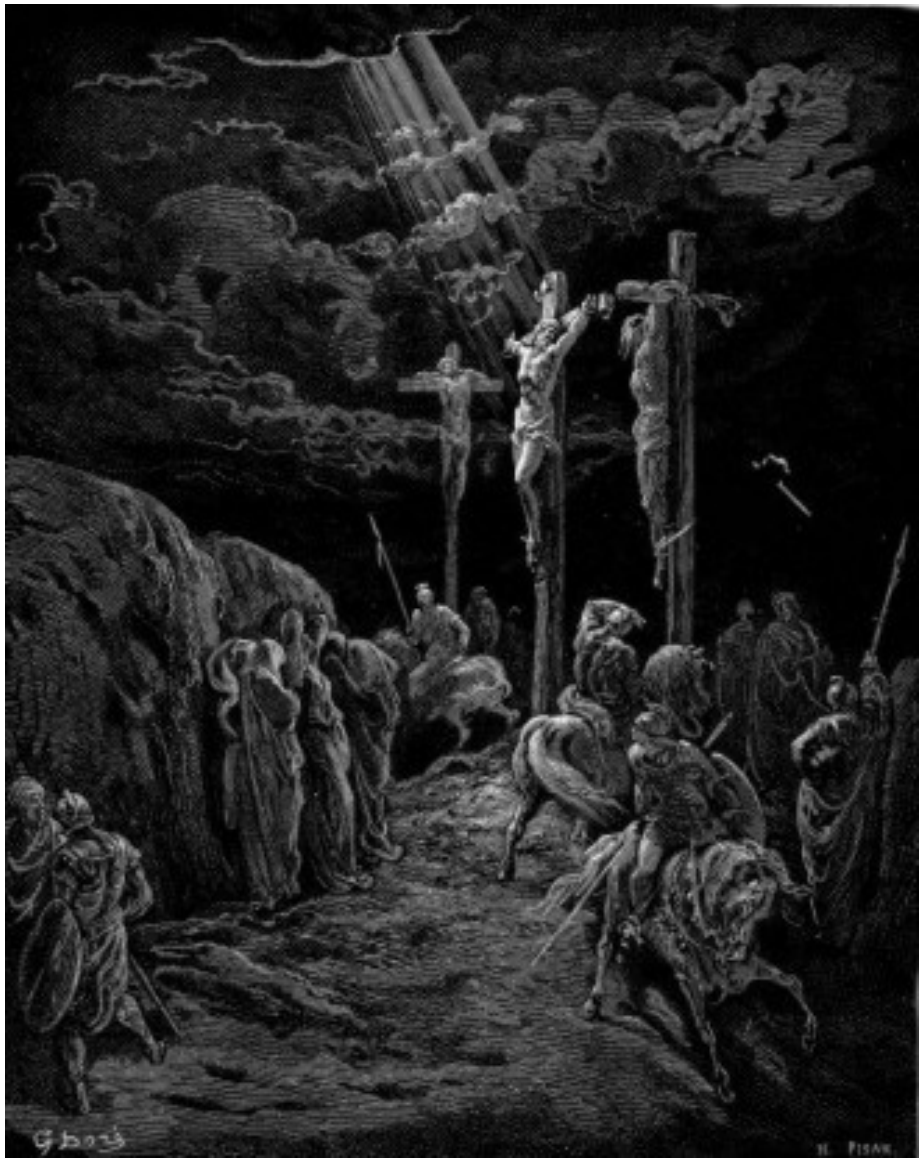
From the perspective of an Unbeliever, Jesus is either a mythological figure or a human being. If he's mythological, then no one is responsible for his death because he never lived. If he's a human being, then he was put to death for pretending to be God's son, or for insurrection. It may or may not be just for an occupying nation to kill insurrectionists fighting for their homeland. But if

Jesus was only human, it hardly matters, two thousand years later, if what the Romans did was just or not.

From the perspective of a Believer, the case that Jesus is responsible for his own death is even stronger. Believers say Jesus freely chose to incarnate on earth so he could suffer and die a painful death for the sins of mankind. So if Jesus freely chose his death then (though Believers hardly ever put it this way) Jesus must be responsible for his death.

Seeing Jesus as responsible for his own death explains why he chose to incarnate in a rebellious country ruled by Rome. Had he incarnated among gentle people who turn the other cheek and forgive seventy times seventy, he might have died of old age, thereby failing in his mission. Stoning, the Jewish penalty for blasphemy, may or may not be painful; if the first stone knocks the victim unconscious, then there's not much pain. But the Romans had crucifixion, a torturously slow method of execution that they reserved for insurrectionists and slaves. So Jesus incarnates and gathers enough popular support for Jerusalem to hail him as a king. Then the Romans give him the kind of death for which he incarnated.

Jesus is responsible for Jesus' death.



The Last Words of Jesus

Years ago, after I realized some of the problems with religions based on Jesus, I began to read about other religions. In a book about Buddhism, I came across the last words of Buddha: "All component things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work hard to gain your own salvation." From what I knew those words seemed to be a fair summation of Buddhism's teaching.

It occurred to me I didn't know the last words of Jesus. That seemed strange.

The death of Jesus is much more dramatic than the death of Buddha. Buddha died quietly after a meal. Jesus died in public, before grieving followers and jeering soldiers. It seemed strange that Jesus hadn't said something memorable. Yet I could not recall anyone ever saying, "These are the last words of Jesus."

Checking scripture for the last words of Jesus isn't very difficult. After a bit of searching, I saw why no one ever speaks of the last words of Jesus. Scripture has more than one version.

How many versions? I'd say three. Believers dispute that number and say there are only two, which is still one too many. Here are the versions:

- Matthew has the first, disputed, version: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? . . . Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. (Matthew, 27:46-50)"
- Luke has the second version: "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. (Luke 23:46)"
- John has the third version: "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. (John 19:30)"

What does the average Believers say about the different last words of Jesus? Nothing, because the average Believer doesn't

know that there is more than one account of Jesus' last words. The average Believer finds it easier to listen to their preacher than to read scripture. And preachers don't mention scripture's contradictions, such as its multiple accounts of Jesus' last words.

Some Believers do read scripture, of course, but they read it "under the influence of religion," that is, with part of their mind asleep. I recall once reading a Hindu swami's explanation of "and lead us not into temptation," from the Lord's Prayer. The Swami's explanation was not one that Believers would accept. So I wondered how Believers explain the verse. Why does Jesus tell his followers to pray that God doesn't lead them into temptation? Does God tempt people? Does God lead people into temptation and sin? Isn't that Satan's job? When I asked Believers, many answered, "I don't know. I've never thought of that." Many Believers repeat the Lord's Prayer all their lives but never think about what they are saying. Apparently, part of their mind is asleep when they say "and lead us not into temptation," just as it is when they read scripture.

Believers who are apologists do attempt to explain the different accounts of Jesus' last words. Some point out that Matthew's version doesn't specify exactly what Jesus cried out. They say he may have cried out "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," which would make Matthew's version agree with Luke. Or he may have cried out "It is finished," which would make it agree with John.

I don't believe that explanation because "when he had cried again" says to me that Jesus repeated "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" again, or perhaps gave an unintelligible cry of pain and anguish. But even if Matthew's version is ignored, that still leaves one version too many. Aren't Luke and John's versions contradictory? Both Luke and John say Jesus said some words and then "gave up the ghost." But they disagree on what he said. One apologist explanation I've read says that Luke hears Jesus say "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" but isn't standing close enough to the cross to hear him also say what John hears: "It is finish."

What can be said about this explanation? First, It's invention, created in the mind of the apologist. It's based on conjecture but has no basis in scripture. Further, though the apologist would

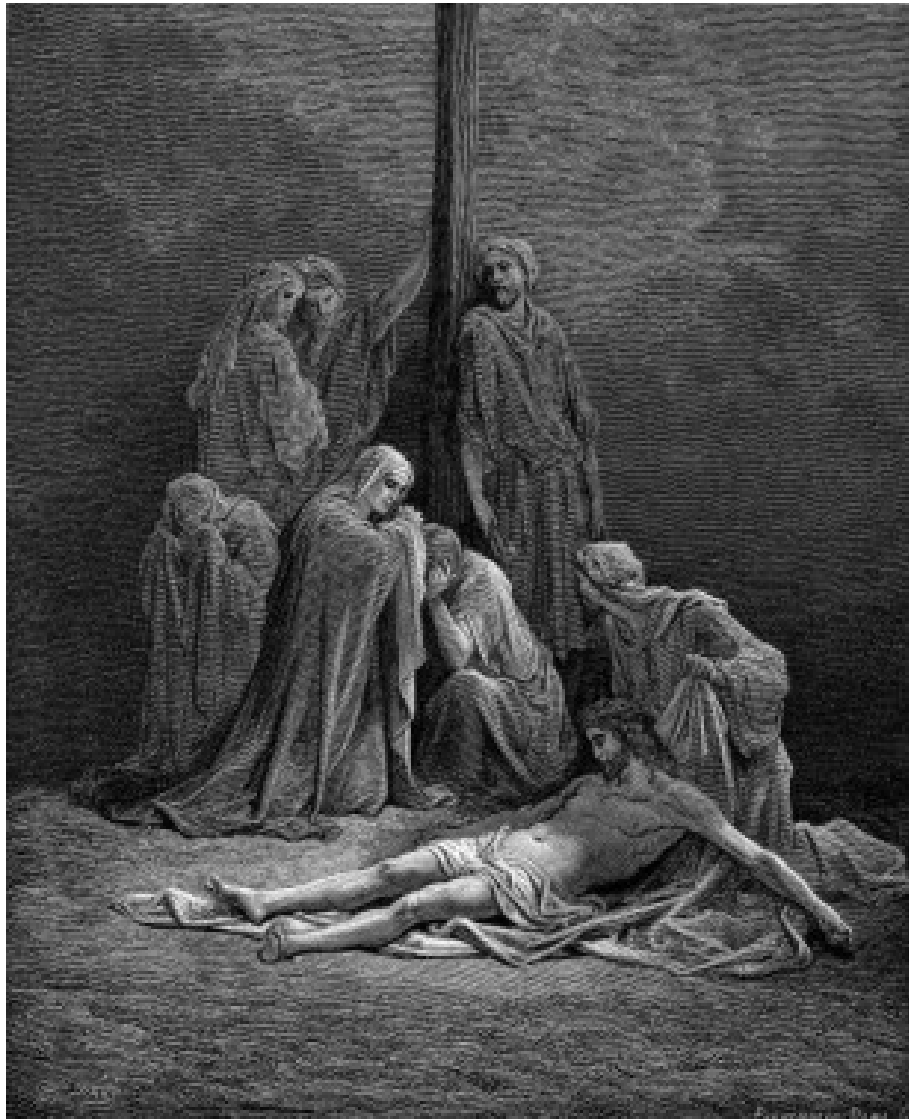
probably insist they "believe scripture," they don't. They refuse to believe what Luke writes.

Also, the explanation says there are mistakes in scripture. According to the explanation, Luke writes what he mistakenly believes are the last words of Jesus. Well, if scripture has mistaken statements, then how can it be the Word of God? How can it be, in the words of one religion, "so inspired by God as to make God its principal author"?

Lastly, the explanation shows how the scriptural contradiction may have originated but doesn't remove the contradiction. It's as if someone says, "two equals five" and then explains that they meant to say "four." The explanation may be true, but it's also true that the person made a mistake.

The apologist's invented explanation, even if it happens to be true, doesn't erase the fact that Luke and John contradict each other, that at least one of them isn't telling the truth.

Scripture has contradictory accounts of Jesus' last words.



Why Jesus had to Suffer and Die

Believers say Jesus had to suffer and die. Why? The short answer is: for humanity's sins. The longer answer involves the dogmas of Original Sin and Vicarious Atonement, and begins with the Garden of Eden.

About six thousand years ago, God creates the first man and woman in a place called the Garden of Eden. There are lots of trees in Eden, one in particular: "the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:9)"

God creates the first man and woman but doesn't give them the knowledge of good and evil, so they are as innocent as little children. "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:25)" They are like toddlers who wander naked from the bath into a room full of guests. So rather than the first man and woman, they are mentally the first toddlers, the first little boy and girl. And God apparently intends for them to stay morally immature, not knowing the difference between right and wrong, because God orders them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—the one tree that can give them the knowledge that will make them mature human beings. Says God: "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Genesis 2:17)"

But a talking snake tells the little girl she will not die; instead, she shall gain the knowledge of good and evil.

She eats of the tree. He eats of the tree. "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; (Genesis 3:7)" The first toddlers, the first little boy and girl, are now the first man and a woman, they now know the difference between good and evil.

Notice that in this very odd story, what God says is false. God says they will surely die the day they eat, but they don't. And what the talking snake says is true: they gain the knowledge of good and evil, which transforms them from the first little boy and girl into the first man and woman. Many Believers say the snake is actually Satan in disguise, which makes the snake's truthfulness odder still. God's untruthfulness is odd in any case.

To return to the story, God is angry at the snake, so God curses all snakes. "And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: (Genesis 3:14)" (Snakes must have been able to walk before God condemned them to go on their belly. Scientists tell us snakes don't eat dust.)

God is angry with the toddlers, too, because they could not resist the snake, who God created and allowed to roam Eden and tempt little children. God is angry because the first man and woman were disobedient, when they were toddlers and didn't know the difference between good and evil, because God created them without that knowledge. So God, as I was taught in Catholic school, "closes the gates of Heaven" to all humanity. Now, every little boy and girl, as well as every other man and woman, will go to hell when they die, to be tortured forever.

Theologians explain the situation in terms of sin. The disobedience of the first toddlers is the first sin, the "Original Sin." Since their souls are now stained with Original Sin, the original toddlers cannot go to Heaven. Worse, Original Sin also stains the souls of all other toddlers who are born, which means that when they die, they go to hell, too. (And who creates souls? God, of course. And why does God choose to create defective souls, souls so stained with Original Sin that they deserve hell? Theologians say the reason has something to do with God's justice.)

God carries a grudge against all humanity for a few thousand years. The gates of heaven remained closed. Everyone who dies goes to hell. Humanity needs a savior.

Eventually God's Son (who is also God) decides to help his Father forgive. God's Son volunteers to be tortured to death to satisfy his father's sense of justice. (How the torture and death of God's son atones for the disobedience of the first toddlers, theologians also explain, not very well in the opinion of this Unbeliever.)

So Jesus comes to earth on a suicide mission. Jesus comes to earth so he can be tortured to death, so that his father will finally

forgive the first little boy and girl, who his father allowed Satan to tempt.

Earth in the time of Jesus has some peaceful nations and some brutal nations. A peaceful nation won't do. Even if Jesus manages to get himself executed it may be in a quick, relatively humane way. Worse yet, suppose he's allowed to live to a ripe, old age. Suppose he dies peacefully, in his sleep. Then he will have failed in his mission.

Jesus needs a brutal nation, one that has a long, painful method of execution. Rome fits the bill. It's a nation that glories in war and conquest, a nation that uses torture and death as entertainment. So, Jesus comes to a rebellious province of Rome, a province where the authorities must torture and kill to keep control. But how can he persuade the Roman authorities to torture and kill him? There are several methods. One, he might openly denounce slavery and the armed subjugation of weaker nations by stronger ones. Two, he might join a revolutionary movement and kill a few Roman soldiers. Three, he might have the locals proclaim him their King, which will provoke the Romans to execute him for insurrection, by crucifixion, a slow, painful method of execution.

Jesus chooses the third method. He spends a few years building a following. Then he rides into Jerusalem, with the populace calling him the King of Israel. The Romans do the rest.

His mission is a success. God the Father sees God the Son tortured and feels his sense of justice has been satisfied. So, he finally forgives the first little boy and girl's disobedience and lets humanity into Heaven.

Rather, God the Father lets a small portion of humanity into Heaven, the "saved" portion. Jesus suffered and died so that the few people who pick the right way of salvation can get into Heaven.



Jesus, the Great Savior

What happens after death? Do we go to heaven or hell? Do we incarnate in another body? Do we simply cease to be?

Many atheists say we cease to be. Depending on their religion, most people say we reincarnate, or we go to heaven or hell.

Jesus teaches heaven or hell. In fact, Believers say that the whole purpose of Jesus' life and death is so that we can go to heaven, so that we can be saved. Believers say scripture's wonderful message, its "good news," is that Jesus' sacrifice atones for our sins and opens the way to heaven, that Jesus saves us.

Saves us from what? From hell, a place of eternal torture created by Jesus' father. That God supposedly created a place of eternal torture, this Unbeliever finds somewhat less than "good news." That souls are there and their torture never ends is not this Unbeliever's idea of good news. That some souls are there for someone else's sin, the sin of Adam and Eve, is hardly good news. But to someone who believes all that, the news that Jesus offers a way of avoiding his father's torture chamber certainly is "good news."

Let's imagine someone, we'll call him Ben, who hears the "good news" that he's destined for eternal torture. Ben decides to be saved. But how should he go about it? Ben knows that different groups of Believers teach different, even contradictory, ways of being saved. So, he turns to scripture for the answer, to learn what Jesus says about being saved.

In some verses, Ben finds Jesus saying a person must actually do something to be saved. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)" says Jesus in one verse. In another, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. (Matthew 19:17)" says Jesus.

In another verse, Ben reads that love is all you need: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself . . . this do, and thou shalt live. (Luke 10:27-28)" He finds nothing about keeping commandments.

In the Beatitudes, Ben finds Jesus saying of the poor in spirit and those persecuted for the sake of righteousness that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This seems to Ben to say those people are saved. Ben also reads that the pure in heart shall "see God," which again seems to say they are saved.

In yet another verse, Ben finds Jesus saying that those who believe in him are saved. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. (John 6:47)" Paul also says belief is sufficient for salvation: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (Romans 10:9)" In fact, Paul goes further and says that merely calling on the name of Jesus will get a person saved: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)"

So far, Ben has learned that to be saved he can follow the commandments, or do the will of God, or love God and neighbor, or be poor in spirit, or be persecuted for the sake of righteousness, or believe in Jesus, or merely call on the name of Jesus. So far, Ben has read "sufficient" conditions, where scripture says "to be saved, it's enough to do this," where scripture says, "If you do this, then you'll be saved." But scripture also has "necessary" conditions, where it says, "to be saved you must do this," where it says, "You can't be saved unless you do this." When Ben reads further, he finds some necessary conditions.

For instance, Ben reads that to get into heaven he must be born again. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)" And he reads that he must be born of water and Spirit: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:5)" And he learns that he must believe the gospel because if he doesn't, he'll be damned: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16:15-16)" Lastly, Ben reads he must be converted and become as a little child: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3)"

Ben realizes that Jesus' necessary conditions contradict the sufficient conditions. For instance, suppose someone is poor in spirit but hasn't been born again; in one verse Jesus says "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" but in another he says, "they cannot see the kingdom of heaven." In one verse, Jesus says a person who doesn't believe in the gospel "shall be damned" but in another he says that "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." So, what happens to a person persecuted for righteousness' sake who doesn't believe in the gospel?

If a person loves God and neighbor they will be saved, says Jesus. If a person disbelieves the gospel, they will be damned, says Jesus. And if a person does both? What then? Suppose the person is a pious Jew, Hindu, or Buddhist, who loves God and neighbor.

Does Jesus contradict himself? Does he say contradictory things about how to be saved? Ben begins to think so but decides to read more scripture and see if it clears up his confusion. He becomes more confused. For instance, Ben reads where Paul says that belief is sufficient to save a person's entire household: "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. (Acts 16:31)" Ben wonders what happens if a woman believes, but her husband doesn't and hasn't been born of water and Spirit. Paul seems to say the husband needn't do anything to get into heaven because he has the right relative. That seems like nonsense to Ben.

Ben decides to ignore the apparent contradictions and try and do what Jesus says he must do to be saved. But now Ben discovers another problem: nowhere in scripture does Jesus say exactly how to be born again, exactly how to be born of water and Spirit, or even if they're the same thing. Ben wonders why. How could Jesus say a thing is necessary for salvation, but not say how to do it?

At this point Ben decides that maybe it wasn't such a good idea to try to understand scripture for himself. So, he decides to see what different groups of Believers say about salvation.

Ben quickly discovers that different groups of Believers teach different ways to be saved. The Catholic Church tells Ben he must join the "One True Church" (i.e., the Catholic Church), must go to

confession and have his sins forgiven, must go to Mass and eat and drink the actual flesh and blood of Jesus, and must die without any unforgiven mortal sins. Catholics say that Catholic infant baptism satisfies Jesus' requirement to be born of water and Spirit, and to be born again. Other groups disagree on almost every point. They tell Ben to be saved he need not join the Catholic church, nor go to confession, nor go to Mass. They say that infant baptism does not satisfy Jesus' requirements for salvation. One group tells him to get into heaven he must be baptized by immersion. Another group says faith alone is enough. Another, that "works" are needed, too. Another group tells him that God has already decided if he is going to heaven or not, that he's only going to heaven if God has placed him among the "Elect."

Worse, many groups tell him that members of other groups are going to hell. For example, for many centuries the Roman Catholic hierarchy taught that only Roman Catholics could get into heaven; that "there is no salvation outside the Church," meaning outside the Catholic Church. I learned that doctrine in Catholic school. Jesus, said the nuns, gave the power of salvation to the Apostles and Saint Peter, the first pope, who passed it down via "Apostolic Succession" to today's hierarchy of pope, cardinal, bishop and priest. In other words, salvation is an exclusive product of the Roman Catholic franchise. (This centuries-old doctrine was relaxed a bit after Vatican II, when some Catholics begin to admit that non-Catholics might be able to get into heaven. But as of this writing the doctrine is making a comeback.)

Some groups of Believers say all Roman Catholic are going to hell and offer various scriptural verses as proof. Some groups condemn to hell everyone who hasn't accepted Jesus as their personal savior, or everyone who hasn't been "born again," or everyone who hasn't been baptized by immersion, or . . . The list goes on and on.

So, what must Ben do to be saved? What must Ben do to go to heaven? He consulted scripture and found contradictory answers. He consulted various groups of Believers and was told contradictory answers. Is there a way of salvation that all Believers admit is valid? No. Whatever way of salvation Ben picks, there

will be some group of Believers to say he's made the wrong choice and is going to hell.

So, whom does Jesus save? If he saves only Believers, he saves only a fraction of humanity. But Believers say that Jesus doesn't save all Believers. Rather, he saves only those Believers who follow the right way. Unfortunately for seekers like Ben, Believers don't agree on what the right way is. It's obvious then that Jesus doesn't bring salvation to all humanity. Rather than a Great Savior, Jesus is at best a minor savior who saves a tiny portion of humanity—Believers who pick the right way. If humanity ever needed a savior, then most of it still needs one.

Why would anyone believe in heaven and hell? What purpose might such belief serve?

Belief in heaven and hell addresses some common worries. Sometimes we worry if what we think or believe really matters, if it makes any ultimate difference in the scheme of things. We worry what happens after death. Does death bring annihilation? Does our life have any lasting significance? Do our choices have any ultimate importance? The teaching of heaven and hell addresses these worries. It says that not annihilation but life, eternal life, awaits us. And it says that how we live our life is of supreme importance because it determines whether we spend all eternity in eternal bliss or eternal torture.

Why would anyone disbelieve in heaven and hell? Well, most people I know don't deserve heaven or hell. The people I know—my family, my friends, my co-workers—lead reasonably good lives. They are friendly. They are kind to their children. They pay their taxes. They don't steal, rape or murder. But neither do they spend their lives working for the benefit of humanity, working to help the poor, the unfortunate, the downtrodden. Though they give some money to charity, they spend the bulk of their income on their own needs, wants, and amusement. Their lives don't seem to deserve the eternal bliss of heaven or the eternal torture of hell. Heaven and hell seem too extreme for people that are usually moderately good and occasionally moderately bad.

If heaven and hell don't await us after death then what does? Many atheists believe in annihilation. Yet, they somehow find a

purpose for their life. They somehow find reasons to lead a moral life.

Another possible answer is reincarnation, which can be seen as midway between the two extremes of eternal life and annihilation, of significance and no significance. It says that the roles we play in this life will pass away but we, the actor who plays those roles, will go on to play other roles. And it says that how we live our life helps or hinders our journey towards our ultimate destination, but that no single life completely determines our eternal destination, that no single act brings eternal bliss or eternal damnation.



Hell for a Hot Dog

As a child in Catholic school, I learned the Catholic requirements for getting into heaven. A Catholic baptism is needed and at the time of death the soul must be free of mortal sin. Only a Catholic priest (or, in case of emergency, another Catholic) can administer Catholic baptism. And only a priest can forgive mortal sins. So being a Roman Catholic in good standing is necessary for forgiveness of sin, and therefore for salvation.

There was yet another condition: eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus in Communion. In the Catholic Mass, said the nuns, the priest performs a "transubstantiation" which supernaturally transforms the bread and wine into the actual flesh and blood of Jesus. The appearance, the "accidents," of bread and wine remain, but the underlying reality, the "substance," changes into the flesh and blood of Jesus. Only a priest can perform the miraculous transformation and only Catholics can partake. So being a Roman Catholic in good standing again becomes a requirement of salvation.

The requirement of eating flesh and drinking blood, said the nuns, is based on: "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:53-54)" Yet, the verses say that eating the flesh of Jesus and drinking his blood—even once—is sufficient to be raised up on the last day and get eternal life; the verses don't mention anything about being a Catholic in good standing or dying with no unforgiven mortal sins. I don't recall that point being addressed when I was in school.

In any event, once someone has been baptized and gone to Communion, the essential task is to avoid dying with an unforgiven mortal sin. But what is a mortal sin? Anything the Church says because the Roman Catholic hierarchy claims it can make something a mortal sin or unmake it. They based their claim on: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

(Matthew 16:19)" Here, according to Roman Catholic teaching, Jesus gives the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" to Peter, the first pope. Thereafter, whatever a pope says is a mortal sin, is.

So, what is a mortal sin? Murder and rape, as might be expected, but also adultery, fornication, using birth control, divorce, and marrying a divorced person. Masturbation is a mortal sin, too. So is skipping Mass on Sunday. When I was a child, too much sex play on a date was a mortal sin. And eating meat on Friday was a mortal sin, too, but now is not.

A person who commits a mortal sin can still get into heaven if they have the sin forgiven before they die. But if they die with the sin unforgiven then they can't get into heaven. And an adult barred from heaven has only one other place to go, hell. (Roman Catholics also have Limbo, but that's for unbaptized babies.)

Who can commit a mortal sin? Not an infant. Nor a toddler. Only someone, says the Church, who has reached the "age of reason," seven years old or older, is responsible for mortal sins they commit. Such was the Roman Catholic Church's teaching when I was in school.

Anyone who dies with an unforgiven mortal sin on his or her soul goes to hell forever. Knowing that, would you make trivial deeds a mortal sin, deeds such as eating meat on a certain day of the week or missing a weekly religious rite? I wouldn't. Why? Because I'd know that some people would die with those "sins" and end up in hell. And I'd feel partially responsible, because if I hadn't made those acts mortal sins those people might be in heaven.

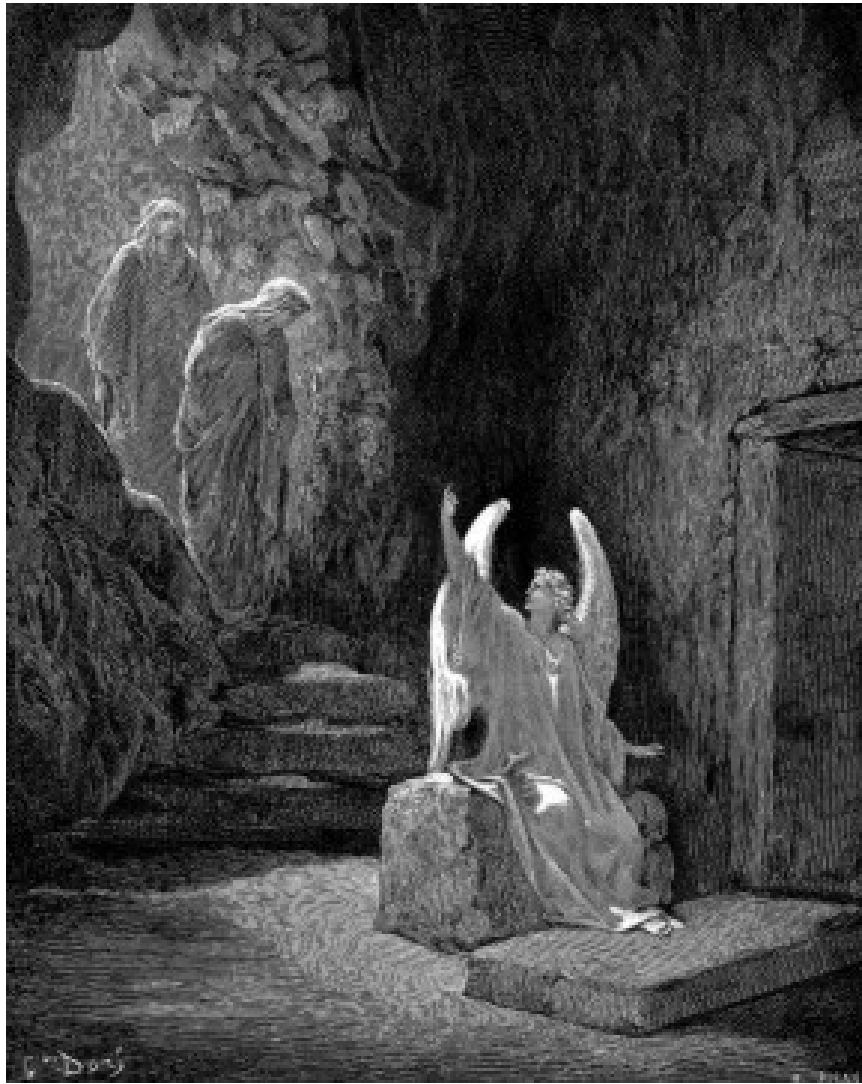
But the Catholic Church evidently feels otherwise. So, it says harmless acts and minor sins are mortal sins. As a consequence (if you believe Catholic teaching) at this moment there are children in hell who died with an unforgiven mortal sin on their soul when they were seven, eight or nine years old. The boy who went to a baseball game, knew it was Friday and ate a hot dog anyway is in hell. The little girl who skipped Mass to play with her friends is in hell. Both are now suffering terrible tortures. And will be tortured forever. Why? Two reasons. One, they ate a hot dog on Friday when eating meat on Friday was a mortal sin. Or they skipped

Mass on Sunday. Two, the Catholic Church made such acts mortal sins, sins against God, sins so terrible as to merit eternal punishment.

Does anyone, even Catholic Believers, take such teachings seriously? I suspect not. When I was in, perhaps, fourth grade a classmate suddenly died of appendicitis. Was he in heaven or hell? A few of my classmates were truly worried. None of the adults, including the priests and nuns, seemed genuinely concerned. They assured us he was in heaven, but how could they know? If the boy had been kidnapped or was lost in the mountains, they probably would have shown genuine concern. But that the little boy might be in hell didn't seem to worry them much. Later as an adult, I reflected on the incident and wondered if any of them really took the doctrine of heaven and hell entirely seriously.

But suppose the Church's teaching of heaven and hell is true. Then the Church has condemned children to the eternal tortures of hell for missing Mass or eating meat on Friday. During the Second World War some monstrous men condemned children to the horrors of concentration camps for being Jewish. Both deeds are monstrous and horrendous. And of the two, which deed is more monstrous and horrendous? The deed that condemns children to years of suffering? Or the deed that condemns them to an eternity of suffering?

Do Roman Catholics really believe what their Church teaches about eternal punishment for unforgiven mortal sins, sins like missing Mass on Sunday? I suspect not. But if Roman Catholics don't actually believe the dogma of hell as a punishment for mortal sin, then why should I? Why should anyone?



Jesus Rises from the Dead

Believers say Jesus rose from the dead. Scripture says: "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. (Job 7:9)"

Some Believers also say that Jesus' resurrection from the dead proves he is God. But don't Jesus' other miracles—his healing miracles, his walking on water, his stilling a storm—also prove he is God, at least to someone who believes scripture? Not necessarily, because scripture says human beings can perform miracles, too.

For example, there's the famous miracle of Moses and Aaron before the Egyptian Pharaoh. "And Moses and Aaron did . . . as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. (Exodus 7:20-21)"

Moses and Aaron though they are only human perform the miracle of killing all the fishes in a river. Then, the Egyptian magicians, who are not even followers of Jesus' father, duplicate the miracle, for the next verse has: "And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said. (Exodus 7:20-22)" (How the Egyptian magicians can kill fishes that Moses and Aaron have already killed, scripture doesn't explain.)

So performing a miracle doesn't prove a person is God. But rising from the dead does, say some Believers.

Further, Jesus is the first to rise from the dead, says scripture: "That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. (Acts 26:23)" And other people rose from the dead, says scripture. Centuries before Jesus, a child is raised from the dead by the prophet Elisha, according to Second Kings 4:32-35. Lazarus is raised from the dead by Jesus, says John 11:44. A young woman is raised by Jesus, says Matthew 9:25. And on the day of Jesus'

death, a great many people are raised from the dead (Matthew 27:50-53), presumably by God. Apologists try to explain away the contradiction by saying Acts means Jesus is the first to rise by his own power, where in the other instances Elisha or Jesus or God does the resurrecting.

Another claim Believers make for Jesus' resurrection is that it places him in league above founders of other religions, such as Moses, Buddha, and Mohammed, who lived, died, but did not rise from the dead. What Believers ignore is that Jesus' resurrection places him in a league with Adonis, Attis, Horus, Krishna, Mithra, and all the other ancient God-Men who rose from the dead. (Refer to the Ancient God-Men appendix). For almost everything that is now believed of Jesus was once believed of other ancient God-Men, too. St. Justin Martyr, an early Believer, admits as much when he writes: "And when we say also that the Word, who is the first-birth of God, was produced without sexual union, and that He, Jesus Christ, our Teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter." Justin lived from 100 to 165, and the quote is from chapter twenty-one of his First Apology.

Rather than placing Jesus above the founders of other religions, this Unbeliever sees Jesus' resurrection as placing him among the "sons of Jupiter," among the other ancient, mythological God-Men who are said to have died and resurrected.

Of course, Believers will insist the stories of other God-Men who rose from the dead are fiction, but that scripture's story of Jesus' resurrection is fact.

Is scripture's story of Jesus' resurrection true? The question assumes that scripture tells a single, self-consistent story, a story that may be true or false. Does it? Or does scripture tell conflicting stories? Scripture has conflicting versions of the last words of Jesus. So, shouldn't we check if scripture tells a single, self-consistent story of Jesus' resurrection before we discuss if the story true or not?

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all tell stories of Jesus' resurrection. Do their stories agree? Let's see.

Who visits the tomb? When? Whom do they meet at the tomb?

- (Matt) At dawn Mary Magdalene and another woman approach the tomb and meet an angel outside the tomb.
- (Mark) Very early in the morning Mary Magdalene and two other women meet a young man inside the tomb
- (Luke) Very early in the morning some people meet two men inside the tomb.
- (John) While its "yet dark" Mary Magdalene visits the tomb and doesn't meet anyone.

What are the visitor(s) told at the tomb?

- (Matt) An angel tells the women to inform the disciples Jesus has risen.
- (Mark) A young man tells the women to inform the disciples Jesus has risen.
- (Luke) One of two young men tells the women Jesus has risen.
- (John) No one tells Mary Magdalene anything.

What happens after the visitor(s) leave the tomb?

- (Matt) The women meet Jesus.
- (Mark) Mary Magdalene meets Jesus. She tells the disciples but they don't believe her.
- (Luke) No mention is made of anyone meeting Jesus. The women tell the disciples that Jesus has risen.
- (John) Mary Magdalene leaves the tomb. No one has told her that Jesus has risen and she hasn't met Jesus, so she says to the disciples, "They have taken away the LORD out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." She and two disciples return to the tomb. After the disciples leave, she sees two angels inside the tomb.

Does Jesus allow himself to be touched?

- (Matt) The women touch Jesus' feet and worship him.
- (John) Mary Magdalene tries to touch Jesus but he says, "Touch me not; for I am no yet ascended to my Father."

Can scripture's stories of Jesus' resurrection be combined into a single story that isn't contrived, convoluted and far-fetched? This Unbeliever has tried and failed. If any Believer would like to try,

here are some hints. First list the four resurrection stories side by side. Or use The Jesus' Resurrections appendix, which has the King James' version of the four stories. Then begin by trying to make sense out of what scripture says Mary Magdalene did early on the day of Jesus' alleged resurrection. Here are some details that need to be reconciled.

While it is still dark Mary Magdalene, according to John, goes to the tomb, finds the tombstone rolled away, and the tomb empty. She runs to tell the disciples. Peter and Simon Peter return to the tomb with her. Mary Magdalene stands outside the tomb. The disciples leave. Then she meets Jesus, who doesn't allow her to touch him.

At dawn Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb (again?) with some women, says Matthew and Mark. Mark says the women wonder who shall roll the tombstone away, but Mary Magdalene, according to John, already knows that it's rolled away. Matthew says the women witness an angel roll back the tombstone, which was already rolled away when Mary Magdalene visited earlier. Matthew also says Mary Magdalene leaves the tomb and meets Jesus on the way. She touches his feet and worships him.

Any Believer who devises what seems to them a reasonable story of what Mary Magdalene did, should keep going, adding other details of what scripture says occurred on the day Jesus supposedly rose from the dead. If that Believer can construct a self-consistent resurrection story that doesn't omit any details from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, then they will have succeeded where this Unbeliever failed. If the story isn't contrived, convoluted or far-fetched, they will have succeeded where many other Believers have failed.

But the Believer shouldn't feel too proud of their accomplishment until they compare their story of Jesus' resurrection to stories that other Believers have devised. Only one story can be true. Other resurrection stories must be imaginative, fictitious creations rather than accurate accounts. Is the Believer's story fictitious? Or are other Believers' stories fictitious?

To this Unbeliever, all such stories are fictitious. Rather than telling a single story of Jesus' resurrection scripture tells multiple, contradictory—and fictitious—stories.

Details

A Believer might well become impatient with our focus on scriptural contradictions and say, "Why obsess with little details? The important thing is that Jesus rose from the dead and offers salvation." Not true. The important thing is whether the stories of Jesus' resurrection from the dead are true or ancient myths.

How can we decide if something in scripture is true or not? One way is to see if it contradicts an established fact. For instance, science has proven that the earth is billions of years old and that life has evolved. So, if scripture denies evolution and says the earth is about six thousand years old, then scripture must be wrong—if you believe science. But whenever scripture contradicts some external fact, Believers may say scripture is right and the external fact is wrong. So, the best way to show that scripture is false is to focus on internal contradictions, where one part of scripture contradicts another.

For instance, the twenty-fourth chapter of Second Samuel has the following story. God is angry with King David, so God provokes David to do a census of Israel. Then God allows David to choose the punishment for doing the census: 1) several years of famine, or 2) three months of being pursued by enemies, or 3) three days of pestilence. David chooses three days of pestilence so God slaughters seventy thousand men.

To this Unbeliever, the story is nonsensical and obviously fictitious. But some Believers insist it's factual and offer various contrived, implausible justifications of God's actions. So, the best way for an Unbeliever to prove to a Believer the story is false is to show how it contradicts another part of scripture, which is easily done because the story also appears in the twenty-first chapter of First Chronicles, with some contradictory details.

Let's examine the stories side by side. We'll see identical verses, which show it's the same story, and contradictory verses, which show that at least one version is false.

| 2nd Samuel, 24 | 1st Chronicles, 21 |
|---|--|
| <p>1 And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.</p> | <p>1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.</p> |
| <p>Someone interferes with David's free will.</p> | |
| <p>2 For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.</p> | <p>2 And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.</p> |
| <p>3 And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?</p> | <p>3 And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be: but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?</p> |
| <p>Joab voices an incoherent objection to the census.</p> | |

| 2nd Samuel, 24 | 1st Chronicles, 21 |
|---|--|
| <p>9 And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.</p> | <p>5 And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword.</p> |
| <p>The census results are in; they don't agree.</p> | |
| <p>10 And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.</p> | <p>7 And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel.</p> |
| <p>Apparently, conducting a census is a great sin against God.</p> | |

| 2nd Samuel, 24 | 1st Chronicles, 21 |
|--|---|
| <p>12 Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me.</p> | <p>11 Thus saith the LORD, Choose thee Either three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee; or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me.</p> |
| <p>David gets to choose his punishment for being provoked by God and Satan to do a census, and for not heeding the incoherent objection of Joab.</p> | |

| 2nd Samuel, 24 | 1st Chronicles, 21 |
|---|--|
| 14 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man. | 13 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man. |
| 15 So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men. | 14 So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. |
| <p>God's mercies are great so he murders seventy thousand men to punish David for doing a census.</p> | |

Identical passages show both tales are two versions of the same story. Contradictory passages show that both versions can't be true. To this Unbeliever, neither version is true.

Focusing on details can show what is true and what is not. And knowing the truth can have life and death consequences, as we saw in the news story about the woman with the newborn baby.



Jesus Ascends to Heaven

Scripture contradicts itself about the last words of Jesus. Scripture contradicts itself about the details of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. True to form, scripture contradicts itself about the details of Jesus' ascension to heaven.

To begin, Jesus says of himself: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. (John 3:13)" No one other than he has ascended to heaven, says Jesus. Elijah ascended to heaven, says scripture: "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. (2nd Kings, 2:11)"

In any event, Jesus ascends bodily to heaven. The ascension occurs after Jesus joins the disciples as they eat, says Mark. "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. . . So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. (Mark 16:14-19)"

In Luke, Jesus is out walking in Bethany with his disciples when he ascends to heaven. "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. (Luke 24:50-51)" In Luke's account, the ascension occurs on the same day as the resurrection.

In Acts, Jesus ascends from the Mount of Olives, a day's journey from Jerusalem, after he has been among the disciples for forty days. "He shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: . . . And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. . . . Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. (Acts 1:3,9,12)"

A Believer may say they believe scripture's account of Jesus' ascension, but which account?



Jesus' Second Coming

Revelations, the last book of scripture, describes what "must shortly come to pass". Here's the verse: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass . . . (Revelations 1:1)" One thing that "must shortly come to pass," according to Revelations, is the Second Coming of Jesus. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him . . . (Revelations 1:7)"

It hasn't come to pass.

Paul writes: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)"

Paul and his listeners are long since gone. And the Lord still hasn't descended from heaven with a shout.

Early followers of Jesus taught he'd return soon. Did Jesus himself teach his own imminent Second Coming?

In the thirteenth chapter of Mark, Jesus describes the last days: "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. . . . Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. (Mark 13:24-26,30)"

The generation has long since passed, but the stars of heaven have not yet fallen.

On another occasion Jesus says some of his hearers will not die until they see the Second Coming: "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. (Mark 9:1)" Matthew has a similar verse: "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. (Matthew 16:28)"

Jesus was wrong about his own Second Coming.

Apologists dispute that conclusion, of course, using various defenses. For instance, they use a "Grandpa" Defense and say that "this generation" doesn't mean this generation; it means the entire Jewish race. Or they say that "seeing the kingdom of God come with power" means seeing Jesus after his resurrection, or means something else.

Yet it is an historical fact that ancient followers preached and believed Jesus would return soon. Where did they get that belief, if not from Jesus himself?

Some apologists admit ancient followers believed and preached a lie, but explain it so that Jesus is not at fault. They explain it as some sort of innocent misunderstanding.

Certainly, in everyday life misunderstandings and miscommunications are common enough. I recall once reading about a company that sold baby food with a picture of a smiling baby on the package. In countries with high illiteracy, people expect the picture on the package to show what's inside. The company misunderstood what some of their customers expect to see on the package.

As another example, a car company introduced a model called the Nova. A nova is a kind of star. But in Spanish "no va" means "no go." And who wants to buy a car called the "no go"?

In both instances, lack of knowledge causes an innocent misunderstanding. The food company's executives don't know what some people expect a package's picture to show. The car company executives don't know what "nova" means in Spanish.

But an all-knowing God knows what "nova" means in every language and knows what customers in any country expect the carton picture to show. An all-knowing God foresees all the consequences of what he says and does. Therefore, if God puts a picture on the carton that doesn't show what is inside, then God intentionally deceives people who can't read. And if God says things that lead his followers to expect him back soon, then God intentionally deceives his followers.

If Jesus is God, then he foresaw how his followers would understand what he said. If Jesus is God, he knew that his words would leave his followers with an untrue belief, so any

misunderstanding could not be innocent and unintended. On the other hand, if Jesus was unaware, he would be misunderstood he cannot be an all-knowing God.

An apologist might point out that Jesus is divine and human, and argue it was his fallible human nature that spoke of his Second Coming. But such an argument immediately raises the question, what other teachings of Jesus were uttered by his fallible human nature? What other teachings of Jesus are wrong?

Many, as we've seen.

Conclusion

Twenty centuries ago, early Believers preached that Jesus is God, that Jesus rose from the dead, that Jesus would return soon.

Today, two thousand years later, we can say with certainty early Believer were wrong when they said Jesus would return soon. Their testimony is false.

Can we believe them when they say Jesus rose from the dead? A few decades ago, a famous, charismatic singer (Elvis Presley) died. There was an autopsy and a funeral. Yet for some years afterwards, fans regularly reported seeing Elvis. Evening news shows regularly featured tongue-in-cheek stories of "Elvis sightings." Suppose Elvis was a charismatic religious teacher instead of a pop singer. Suppose he died two thousand years ago, when people were more uneducated and credulous. Then his fans might sincerely believe he rose from the dead. But that wouldn't make it true. Early Believers were wrong when they said Jesus would return soon. So why should they be believed when they say Jesus rose from the dead?

Scripture makes the same claims, of course, because the people who falsely preached Jesus' Second Coming wrote scripture. But scripture disagrees with itself, as we've seen. It gives contradictory testimony so we can say without a doubt at least some of its testimony is false.

Once we realize that early believers are wrong when they say Jesus will return soon, once we decide early believers are wrong when they say Jesus rose from the dead, why would we believe them when they say Jesus is God?

Scripture is contradictory. Early believers believed and preached falsely. So what reason is there to believe Jesus is God, the offspring of a virgin woman impregnated by another God?

This Unbeliever finds none.

Appendix: Miracles

| | Healings | Matt | Mark | Luke | John |
|----|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | Cleansing of a Leper | 8:02 | 1:40 | 5:12 | |
| 2 | Healing a Centurion's Servant | 8:05 | | 7:01 | |
| 3 | Healing Peter's Mother-in-law | 8:14 | 1:30 | 4:38 | |
| 4 | Healing the Sick at evening | 8:16 | 1:32 | 4:40 | |
| 5 | Casts demons into a herd of swine | 8:28 | 5:01 | 8:26 | |
| 6 | Healing a paralytic | 9:02 | 2:03 | 5:18 | |
| 7 | Healing the Hemorrhaging woman | 9:20 | 5:25 | 8:43 | |
| 8 | Healing Two Blind Men | 9:27 | | | |
| 9 | Curing a Demon-possessed Mute | 9:32 | | | |
| 10 | Healing a Man's Withered Hand | 12:09 | 3:01 | 6:06 | |
| 11 | Curing a Blind/Mute man of a demon | 12:22 | | 11:14 | |
| 12 | Healing the Gentile Woman's Daughter | 15:21 | 7:24 | | |
| 13 | Healing the Epileptic Boy | 17:14 | 9:17 | 9:38 | |
| 14 | Healing a Blind Men | 20:30 | 10:46 | 18:35 | |
| 15 | Healing a Deaf Mute | | 7:31 | | |
| 16 | Healing a Blind Man at Bethsaida | | 8:22 | | |
| 17 | Healing the Infirm, Bent Woman | | | 13:11 | |
| 18 | Healing the Man with Dropsy | | | 14:01 | |
| 19 | Cleansing the Ten Lepers | | | 17:11 | |
| 20 | Restoring a Servant's Ear | | | 22:51 | |
| 21 | Healing the Nobleman Son's Fever | | | | 4:46 |
| 22 | Healing an Infirm Man at Bethesda | | | | 5:01 |
| 23 | Healing the Man born blind | | | | 9:01 |
| | Resurrections | Matt | Mark | Luke | John |
| 1 | Raising the Ruler's Daughter | 9:18,23 | 5:22,35 | 8:40,49 | |
| 2 | Raising of a Widow's Son at Nain | | | 7:11 | |
| 3 | Raising of Lazarus | | | | 11:43 |
| | Nature Miracles | Matt | Mark | Luke | John |
| 1 | Stilling the Storm | 8:23 | 4:35 | 8:22 | |
| 2 | Feeding Five Thousand People | 14:13 | 6:30 | 9:10 | 6:01 |
| 3 | Walking on the Water | 14:25 | 6:48 | | 6:19 |
| 4 | Feeding Four Thousand People | 15:32 | 8:01 | | |
| 5 | Temple Tax in the Fish's Mouth | 17:24 | | | |
| 6 | Withering the Fig Tree | 21:18 | 11:12 | | |
| 7 | Casting Out an Unclean Spirit | | 1:23 | 4:33 | |
| 8 | Draught of Fish | | | 5:01 | |
| 9 | Turning Water into Wine | | | | 2:01 |
| 10 | Second Draught of Fish | | | | 21:01 |

Appendix: The Genealogies of Jesus

Genealogies from Luke 3 and Matthew 1. (Note: If Luke's genealogy is true, the earth is only a few thousand years old. It's not.)

| Luke | Matthew | | Luke | Matthew | | Luke |
|------------|-----------|--|----------|----------|--|-----------|
| Joseph | Joseph | | Elmodam | Solomon | | Phares |
| Heli | Jacob | | Er | David | | Juda |
| Matthat | Matthan | | Jose | Jesse | | Jacob |
| Levi | Eleazar | | Eliezer | Obed | | Isaac |
| Melchi | Eliud | | Jorim | Booz | | Abraham |
| Janna | Achim | | Matthat | Salmon | | Thara |
| Joseph | Sadoc | | Levi | Naasson | | Nachor |
| Mattathias | Azor | | Simeon | Aminadab | | Saruch |
| Amos | Eliakim | | Juda | Aram | | Ragau |
| Naum | Abiud | | Joseph | Esrom | | Phalec |
| Esli | Zorobabel | | Jonan | Phares | | Heber |
| Nagge | Salathiel | | Eliakim | Judas | | Sala |
| Maath | Jechonias | | Melea | Jacob | | Cainan |
| Mattathias | Josias | | Menan | Isaac | | Arphaxad |
| Semei | Amon | | Mattatha | Abraham | | Sem |
| Joseph | Manasses | | Nathan | | | Noe |
| Juda | Ezekias | | David | | | Lamech |
| Joanna | Achaz | | Jesse | | | Mathusala |
| Rhesa | Joatham | | Obed | | | Enoch |
| Zorobabel | Ozias | | Booz | | | Jared |
| Salathiel | Joram | | Salmon | | | Maleleel |
| Neri | Josaphat | | Naasson | | | Cainan |
| Melchi | Asa | | Aminadab | | | Enos |
| Addi | Abia | | Aram | | | Seth |
| Cosam | Roboam | | Esrom | | | Adam |

Appendix: Some Ancient God-Men

| God-Man | Virgin mother | Father God | Place, time | Notes |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|--|
| Adonis | Ishtar | | Babylon | Adonis died and resurrected. |
| Alexander, the Great | | Zeus | Macedonia | Born of a virgin |
| Attis | Nama | Agdistis | Phrygia, 200 B.C. | Attis practiced self-castration. Died and was resurrected. |
| Buddha | Maya | | India, 600 B.C. | Called the "Good Shepherd." |
| Heracles | Alcmene | Zeus | Greece | Ascended to heaven. |
| Horus | Isis | Osisis | Egypt, 1500 B.C. | Born December 25 th . Three kings gave gifts. Osisis was called the "Resurrection and the Life" |
| Indra | | | Tibet, 800 B.C. | Ascended to heaven. |
| Jesus | Mary | The Holy Spirit | Israel, 0 A.D. | Yahweh/God the Father also said to be father. |
| Krishna | Devaki | Vishnu | India, 1100 B.C. | A King trying to kill infant Krishna, killed other infants. |
| Mithra | | | Persia, 600 B.C. | Too many similarities to list. |
| Plato | | Apollo | Greece | |
| Pythagoras | | Apollo | Greece | |
| Quirrnus | | | Rome, 600 B.C. | Death followed by universal darkness |
| Zoroaster | Dughdova | | Persia, 600 B.C. | |

Appendix: Jesus' Resurrections

| Matthew 28 | Mark 16 | Luke 24 | John 20 |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>1In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.</p> | <p>1And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.</p> | <p>1Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.</p> | <p>1The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.</p> |
| <p>2And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.</p> | <p>2And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.</p> | <p>2And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.</p> | <p>2Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the LORD out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.</p> |

| Matthew 28 | Mark 16 | Luke 24 | John 20 |
|---|--|--|---|
| 3His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: | 3And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? | 3And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. | 3Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. |
| 4And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. | 4And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. | 4And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: | 4So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. |
| 5And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. | 5And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. | 5And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? | 5And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. |

| Matthew 28 | Mark 16 | Luke 24 | John 20 |
|---|--|---|--|
| 6He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. | 6And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. | 6He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, | 6Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, |
| 7And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. | 7But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. | 7Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. | 7And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. |

| Matthew 28 | Mark 16 | Luke 24 | John 20 |
|--|---|---|--|
| 8And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. | 8And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. | 8And they remembered his words, | 8Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. |
| 9And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. | 9Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. | 9And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. | 9For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. |

| Matthew 28 | Mark 16 | Luke 24 | John 20 |
|---|--|---|--|
| 10Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. | 10And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. | 10It was Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. | 10Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. |
| | 11And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. | 11And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. | 11But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, |

| Matthew 28 | Mark 16 | Luke 24 | John 20 |
|------------|---------|--|--|
| | | <p>12Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.</p> | <p>12And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.</p> |
| | | | <p>13And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid him.</p> |

| Matthew 28 | Mark 16 | Luke 24 | John 20 |
|---------------|---------|---------|---|
| | | | 14And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. |
| | | | 15Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. |
| | | | 16Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. |
| | | | 17Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. |

| | | | |
|---------------|---------|---------|--|
| Matthew 28 | Mark 16 | Luke 24 | John 20 |
| | | | 18Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the LORD, and that he had spoken these things unto her. |

